

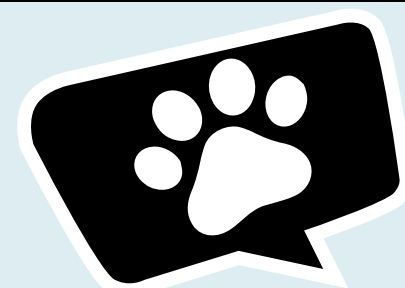


..Paws for Thought! NEWSLETTER



Photo: L-R : Emma Meredith - PSNI Wildlife Officer and Chief Inspector Joanne Gibson (Previously in Mid Ulster) who were recently presented with an award by Chief Constable Simon Byrne QPM as part of the Northern Ireland Policing Board Problem solving awards.

Welcome to the second edition of the Paws for Thought newsletter, a platform to share updates relating to the ongoing campaign in Northern Ireland to combat puppy smuggling.



News..

The original 'Paws for Thought' concept stemmed from Mid Ulster in 2019 and was born out of a desire from the public for Police to tackle the illegal trade of puppies in Mid Ulster. Police initially began by using social media through their press officer to highlight the problem.

The public response was immense resulting in people coming forward. Many alluded to illegal breeding establishments located in the local area. Information gathered suggested the problem was linked to organised crime. A multi-agency working group was convened as it was recognised very early on that not one agency had the answer and yet all agencies had problems but were perhaps more isolated taking this on alone. The first positive outcome in December 2019 was a multi-agency

search and subsequent discovery of an illegal breeding establishment where 31 puppies and dogs were seized by PSNI.

The operation proved successful and served as a Blueprint for districts experiencing similar issues and other districts followed. Over lockdown in 2020, pup prices soared and it is estimated that millions of pounds are being made through this industry.

DAERA subsequently adopted 'Paws for Thought' in 2020 as their multi-agency response to Puppy Smuggling. As a result of the close collaboration between agencies there have been a significant number of large seizures made at both Larne and Belfast Ports since the groups conception.

continued ...

Puppy smuggling is cruel and illegal!

..Paws for Thought!
If you see something suspicious **PLEASE** report it.



**Belfast
City Council**



**Mid & East
Antrim
Borough Council**



**Belfast Harbour
Police**



**HM Revenue
& Customs**

In addition to normal pre-export checks, efforts were intensified in the run up to Christmas to combat anticipated increased activity. Almost 30 pups were rescued at Belfast Port in one seizure as part of the multi-agency crackdown. Further information on this latest seizure can be viewed on the [DAERA website](#).



Christmas Initiative

As an active member of the Paws for Thought Group, Larne Port also participated in the Paws for Thought Christmas Initiative. Alongside targeting illegal transportation of puppies on the run up to Christmas, the aim of this initiative was also to raise public awareness. This was achieved through the displaying of additional promotional material and posters in and around local businesses and the immediate Port area as well as

targeted monitoring of traffic using the ferry service during the month of November and December. A large thank you to all the local businesses who supported the Harbour Authority by displaying these posters within public and staff areas.



From this initiative there was a visible reduction in the number of puppies being transported to Great Britain, which illustrates the potential deterrent this initiative produced and will hopefully help to contribute to a reduction in the number of puppies being transported illegally.

Paws for Thought Group co-ordinate their efforts with their counterparts in the rest of the UK and have liaised closely with 'Operation Delphin'. Operation Delphin is a multi-agency collaboration, led by the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which aims to tackle illegal puppy smuggling across the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland. Several key animal welfare charities in the UK and in Ireland participate in its activities.

Social media messaging around the success of the pre-christmas campaign attracted almost 30,000 hits on Twitter and 84,000 on Facebook. This was in addition to substantial online coverage by media outlets such as the BBC, ITV and the Belfast Telegraph. Increased coverage serves to raise public awareness as to this abhorrent trade and the need to stamp it out.



Up and Coming..

The Paws for Thought Group have met in February 2023 to evaluate the effectiveness of ongoing operations and identify any potential for further strengthening the multi-agency approach to detecting and deterring the illegal trade in low welfare pups.



..Paws for Thought!

Should a member of the public suspect any illegal dog breeding activity, or have an animal welfare concern, they should contact their local council.