



Chairman's Report 2009

1. Greyhound Rescue Shropshire & Borders

- This is the third formal Annual General Meeting of GRSB. We are no longer a new organisation but we continue to be a dynamic, evolving and successful one in both fund raising and dog homing activities. We now need to build upon our successes and ensure positive growth in the future by attracting new members and refining our administration.
- As ever warm thanks are due to all of our supporters and activists; since we began in 2006 we have homed over 350 dogs and this would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts of our band of volunteers.

2. Meeting Our Objectives

In our Constitution we set out:

1. *To alleviate the distress of ex-racing greyhounds and lurchers in need of care, protection, treatment and rehoming in Shropshire, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham and Montgomeryshire*
 - We did not set out to be an exclusively greyhound rescue organisation as lurchers were already dear to the hearts of many volunteers. We did, though, set out with what we considered to be a highly ambitious target – to home 100 dogs a year. In the period 2008/2009, we have homed 127, comprising 52 greyhounds and 75 lurchers. This total is very slightly lower than last year but when we consider the impact of the economic recession, the larger number of dogs subsequently needing homes and the greater difficulty of finding suitable homes, this is still a significant achievement. We are currently holding 20 greyhounds and 14 lurchers in the kennels at Condover with 8 out to foster.
 - This year supporters have undertaken a range of successful events which are noted elsewhere in this report. Worthy of particular mention here is the considerable success of Malcolm Tipton's book sales which are making a major contribution to our fund raising totals.
 - Also this year we held to our plan and opened up Racers' Retreat, a home for dogs difficult to place at the end of their lives, at Moorlands. At the same time Sue and Malcolm Tipton opened Paw Prints, a unit to sell books and bric a brac with all proceeds coming to GRSB.
2. *To provide facilities for their reception and veterinary care and to place them in kennels or foster homes until such time as appropriate permanent homes are found*
 - We could not continue our work without the active support of Sue & Malcolm Tipton and their kennels at Condover. They not only provide accommodation for the dogs but ensure that each one receives appropriate veterinary treatment, that homing offers are properly assessed and that rehoming are followed up.
3. *To promote public understanding of the plight of abused and abandoned greyhounds and lurchers and their value as pets*
 - We continue to work hard to alert people to the plight of many greyhounds and to promote the joy of homing one (or more) as a pet. Publicity, education and promotion during our seasonal events are as important as fund raising and we are always ready with our pop-up banners, leaflets and persuasive conversation. We have maintained good relationships with local newspapers and featured in a large number of articles. We publish newsletters and maintain a regularly updated website with news of the dogs and events.

3. The Future of GRSB

- We shall continue to strive to fulfil our objectives to alleviate greyhound and lurcher distress, house and treat them, find them appropriate homes and raise public awareness of their situation.
- In looking forward to 2009/2010 we need to be aware of national issues and local challenges which will have an impact upon our work:

Greyhound Welfare

We do not need to work very hard to demonstrate to ourselves and to others that there will be an ongoing need for our efforts for greyhound welfare for a considerable number of years to come. Under the Animal Welfare Act the government is committed to introducing, this autumn, via a Statutory Instrument, new regulations on the Welfare of Racing Greyhounds. If the Statutory Instrument is approved by both Houses of Parliament, these regulations will come into force on 6 April 2010.

However, the political world is presently very crowded and election fever is very high; were there to be a general election before April the future of these new regulations is very uncertain.

Defra ran a consultation exercise, to which we made a submission, on the proposed new regulations during April to July of this year. Their report has now been published (October); it is available in full on their website (www.defra.gov.uk) but we may note the following:

- The focus of the regulations is welfare at tracks, not training kennels
- There will be a local authority licensing scheme for tracks with exemptions for 'accredited' tracks
- A vet should be present at all races and trials
- Earmarking will remain but will be reviewed after 5 years
- There will be no single database for greyhounds
- There is no plan to move towards the banning of greyhound racing
- There will be no independent regulatory authority – the industry will be required to monitor itself subject to local authority and statutory requirements
- There will be no prevention of the euthanasia of a greyhound by an owner (no unlawful suffering)
- "Ideally the Government would like to see a situation where the number of dogs used by the sport is matched by the number of dogs that can be suitably rehomed. However, we believe that this is an issue that the industry itself should address."
- There will be no further limits on breeding
- Restricting imports from Ireland would be unlawful under EU free trade rules

4. Organisation & Finance

You will see from our last two financial reports that our turnover has increased from £65,355 to £91,755, growth of some 40%. Vigorous fund raising and homing means that we end the financial year with assets of £18,900 compared to £16,600 last year despite having invested £5,000 in Racers' Retreat. We need to maintain this momentum and, at the same time, improve our efficiency and professionalism as an organisation. In order to achieve this there are a number of issues which require debate and resolution in the coming months.

1. **Fragmentation**

GRSB is a charitable body working as a subset of the Retired Greyhound Trust. As such, elected officers are responsible for fund raising events held in our name whether that be in Wolverhampton or Wrexham or points in between. We need to sharpen our communication and co-ordination in this respect so that everyone knows what is happening and to ensure that any overlapping events are manageable.

2. **Events**

We reduced the number of major shows that we attended in 2009 and now we need to review that decision in the light of experience and of our mission to raise public awareness of greyhound issues as well as money. 2009 experience has also suggested that organisers of individual 'minor' events have not always advised others of their activities leading us to be overstretched at times.

3. **Merchandising**

We operate over a wide geographical area and our events have become more widespread as we try to achieve support. There is now, as a result, a case to be made for 'boxes' of stock to be held in other locations (say, Shrewsbury, Telford and Llangollen) which would be much more convenient for all concerned. If we agree this we might also consider a consistent pricing policy for all venues. There is at least a debate to be had about high mark up and low sales against the successful Tesco philosophy of lower mark ups and greater sales volume.

4. **Volunteers**

Our prime need is for more bodies both to underpin current activities and to secure the longer term future of the charity. Our turnover now makes us the equivalent of a small business and we need to be more business-like in our approach to all activities. Accounting, databases, records, publicity, computing, communicating and organising all demand time and, in some cases, specific skills or experience. We need to be able to distribute the workload more widely and for this we need more people with a variety of skills prepared to commit themselves regularly and in the longer term. For example, we have been advised that we should compile an assets register as part of our financial procedures. Currently that kind of task will fall on the same old shoulders. Succession is also a significant issue as older volunteers will not want to maintain their commitments indefinitely. We are currently preparing 'recruitment posters' for local veterinary surgeries and other likely locations.

5. **Reserves**

We had decided to fund a puppy unit similar to Racers' Retreat at Moorlands. It has been agreed with the Tiptons to put this on hold for the moment. There is the possibility of renting land adjacent to the kennels for use as a greyhound exercise area and there may be more value in this option.

6. **Communication and Decision Making**

Many workplaces are hotbeds of gossip, misinformation and finger pointing. Voluntary organisations can be very much the same. As volunteers we all have different experiences, skills and areas of interest to contribute. It is inevitable that there will be differences of opinion on what we do and how we operate. We have a regular forum to air issues and resolve differences; let us continue to use it and the dogs will benefit as a result.

Keith Benning

19 October 2009

Chairman