

**Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Belfast
BT4 3XX**

I am writing to you regarding your constituent Shannon-Leah Brown and her pet dog 'Bruce' an innocent dog who has been sentenced to die and was due to be destroyed on Monday 6th July, until a last minute stay of execution was granted as legal proceedings are ongoing.

Bruce, a young Staffordshire Bull Terrier, was living happily with his family in Bangor, when on September 19th 2007 he was seized by council officials as an alleged "pit bull type" and taken to secluded kennels whilst his owner was taken to court for owning a banned type of dog contrary to the Dangerous Dogs Act (Order) 1991. A trial was heard at Bangor Magistrates' Court on 27th August 2008 and the court determined that Bruce was "of type" despite the evidence from two expert identification witnesses who said he was not. Judgement was given two weeks later on the 12th September and Bruce was ordered destroyed devastating his family and supporters. He remains on 'canine death row'.

Whilst incarcerated in kennels his family were allowed to visit Bruce in October 2007, Bruce had lost weight, muscle tone and had a cut to his muzzle. Five months later Bruce was allowed a second visit from his family in March 2008, they were shocked with what they found: The wound on Bruce's muzzle was larger and had become infected, he had to have his tail amputated, had open sores, was underweight and looked totally rejected, yet despite the clear pain he was in, is described by experts as being a friendly dog that poses no danger to the public.

Bruce has been offered a place of safety with a dedicated rescue and sanctuary in Southern Ireland where he could legally live out the rest of his life but this offer has not so far been accepted by the court.

Bruce hasn't actually ever put a paw wrong; he is sentenced to death due to the way he looks and the fact that Northern Ireland has breed specific legislation for dogs found to resemble 'pit bull types'. Law which has been widely criticised by all the leading animal welfare groups across the UK as being unworkable and pointless in that it does not actually 'protect the public'.

In a desperate attempt to save Bruce, owner Shannon Brown, supporters and neighbours have created petitions and videos resulting in support from Northern Ireland and worldwide to "Bring Bruce Home". Dogs are part of our families as much as children. Please support your constituent - Bruce's owner and add your voice to help defend Bruce.

As the plight of Bruce's story travels, support for him and horror, disgust and anger against a law which permits the killing of an innocent dog based on its appearance is flooding in and the world is now watching Northern Ireland and following the case.

I look forward to your view on the legislation and plea that you please support Bruce and bring this matter to the urgent attention of the Northern Ireland Assembly.
I look forward to your reply and thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely