

The Public Space Protection Order for Shropshire prohibits dogs from running freely in public streets. On Boxing Day, the Ludlow Hunt brings a large number of dogs into Ludlow, all of them running freely. Last year, SC reminded the public of the £100 fine if members of the public disobey the PSPO in a Facebook post.

In an email exchange with council staff, we were told that hunt dogs are exempt from the PSPO because they are 'working dogs'. However, unlike other PSPOs elsewhere, there is no specific exemption for hunt dogs in Shropshire. At the Boxing Day meet, hunt dogs were not providing any service for which they are trained. Hounds are trained to follow scent - they were not doing that at the meet. They were running about, unleashed in the streets. If any other dog did that, no matter who owned them, you would fine the owner.

Working dogs are trained to provide an essential and useful, but not threatening, SERVICE TO PEOPLE. It is far-fetched to claim that hunt dogs, owned by a commercial business (hunts are commercial businesses), are in any way comparable to sheep dogs, guide dogs or assistance dogs. The closest comparison to hunt dogs are guard dogs. No guard dog would be allowed to run freely about in the street.

In the last email I received from SC (April 25), I was told this:

"Farming activity will be mostly confined to private property except [sic] where movement is required for livestock, hunts, and possibly shoots. In these circumstances it would be reasonable to exempt working animals..."

Hunts are obviously not farms, and their dogs are not farm dogs. So this comment is invalid.

I was also told this "...albeit for organised and timed events, for example hunts to avoid abuse and to enable enforcement should it be necessary". As this made no sense at all, I asked what 'abuse' the writer of the email was referring to and what 'enforcement' they meant. Despite reminders and a complaint, I received no reply. For further details about the exchange, use this link.

<https://www.actionagainstfoxhunting.org/ludlow-boxing-day-meet/>

Here, you will find details of how hounds are a threat to public health.

It seems to us that you are knowingly treating the hunt differently from any other dog owner in Shropshire. Your reasoning is far-fetched, and does not fit with the intention of the PSPO. It is extremely unfair to fine other dog owners and allow the hunt to do what they like on Boxing Day.

Please confirm that this year, the hunt will not be permitted to bring their pack of dogs into the Ludlow Town Centre, unless they are all on leads. Please also confirm that I will receive a full and considered response to my emails to SC on this subject.