

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT
GENERAL COMMITTEES

Public Bill Committee

GLUE TRAPS (OFFENCES) BILL

Wednesday 19 January 2022

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CLAUSES 1 TO 10 agreed to.
Bill to be reported, without amendment.

No proofs can be supplied. Corrections that Members suggest for the final version of the report should be clearly marked in a copy of the report—not telephoned—and must be received in the Editor’s Room, House of Commons,

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Sunday 23 January 2022

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The Committee consisted of the following Members:

Chair: PETER DOWD

- | | |
|---|--|
| † Bacon, Gareth (<i>Orpington</i>) (Con) | † Mohindra, Mr Gagan (<i>South West Hertfordshire</i>) (Con) |
| Cameron, Dr Lisa (<i>East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow</i>) (SNP) | † Mortimer, Jill (<i>Hartlepool</i>) (Con) |
| † Champion, Sarah (<i>Rotherham</i>) (Lab) | † Richards, Nicola (<i>West Bromwich East</i>) (Con) |
| † Churchill, Jo (<i>Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs</i>) | † Rosindell, Andrew (<i>Romford</i>) (Con) |
| † Davies-Jones, Alex (<i>Pontypridd</i>) (Lab) | † Saxby, Selaine (<i>North Devon</i>) (Con) |
| Farron, Tim (<i>Westmorland and Lonsdale</i>) (LD) | † Stevenson, Jane (<i>Wolverhampton North East</i>) (Con) |
| † Jones, Ruth (<i>Newport West</i>) (Lab) | † Tami, Mark (<i>Alyn and Deeside</i>) (Lab) |
| † McCarthy, Kerry (<i>Bristol East</i>) (Lab) | † Vickers, Matt (<i>Stockton South</i>) (Con) |
| † Mayhew, Jerome (<i>Broadland</i>) (Con) | Adam Mellows-Facer, <i>Committee Clerk</i> |
| | † attended the Committee |

Public Bill Committee

Wednesday 19 January 2022

[PETER DOWD *in the Chair*]

Glue Traps (Offences) Bill

1.30 pm

The Chair: Before we begin, I have a few preliminary reminders. Members are expected to wear face coverings and maintain distancing as far as possible. I remind everyone that they are asked by the House to have a lateral flow test each day before coming on to the parliamentary estate. Please switch electronic devices to silent. *Hansard* colleagues would be grateful if Members could email their speaking notes to hansardnotes@parliament.uk.

My selection and grouping for today's meeting is available online and in the room. No amendments were tabled. We will have a single debate covering all 10 clauses. To help everyone, I will call Jane Stevenson, then go to the Back Benchers, the shadow Minister, the Minister, and then back to Jane Stevenson. That is the plan.

Clause 1

OFFENCES RELATING TO GLUE TRAPS IN ENGLAND

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

The Chair: With this it will be convenient to discuss that clauses 2 to 10 stand part.

Jane Stevenson (Wolverhampton North East) (Con): It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Dowd. I thank all fellow Members who have come today for joining me to discuss this important Bill. I am delighted to be able to bring forward a Bill that will advance the country's standards for animal welfare. The Bill proposes the ban of glue traps for catching rodents in all but the most exceptional circumstances.

Glue traps have the potential to cause immense suffering to animals caught in them. The British Veterinary Association reports that trapped animals can suffer from torn skin, broken limbs, hair removal, and die a slow and painful death—from suffocation, starvation, exhaustion and even self-mutilation.

While they are sold as rodent traps, many animals get caught on them, with more than 200 incidents reported to the RSPCA over a five-year period, involving cats, garden birds, hedgehogs, squirrels, and even a parrot. The animals suffer horrendous injuries. Miles the cat, who made the local press, was stuck to four glue traps and had to be put to sleep as nothing could be done to save him.

As a lifelong animal lover, my grandfather—grandad Mattox, who was born in wonderful Wednesfield in my constituency—instilled in me a love of animals, and of birds especially. For anyone doubting the cruelty of these traps, a quick Google search will bring up some horrific photographs of robins, owls and songbirds stuck on them. This Bill has wide support across the

Chamber, and it is not surprising that a 2015 survey found that over two thirds of people supported a ban on glue traps.

Although it is important that we control rodent populations where they are causing a problem, other pest control methods are available. Effective rodent proofing is often a good solution, as are live capture and release or humane lethal methods such as break back traps, which would kill instantly. It is right to prevent the use of glue traps by the general public. The Bill proposes that they should be a last resort for professional pest controllers, where there is no alternative.

Mark Tami (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab): I applaud the progress the hon. Lady has made on this Bill, which I fully support. One area of concern is on the definition of a pest controller. I am concerned that a restaurant's owner or cleaner, for example, could designate themselves as the pest controller and could therefore have access to glue traps.

Jane Stevenson: I thank the right hon. Member for his intervention. I would also like to thank him for his work on raising awareness of glue traps—over many years, I think. All these concerns are, I think, things for the licensing regime, which will be coming into force over the next two years if the Bill is successful. However, I absolutely agree. We must be aware that those people licensed to use the traps must be qualified—and qualified in dispatching animals humanely, because glue traps do not kill animals; they just leave them stuck and stranded.

There is another thing for the licensing regime to consider. I have spoken with many animal welfare organisations over the past year, and one suggestion was the use of pressure pads. I think that technology could help to make traps even more humane when they do have to be used. A pressure pad would alert the pest controller that something has triggered the trap. The current recommendation is to check traps every 12 hours, but I hope that licensing will encourage the use of technology so that animals are left in traps for the minimum possible time.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): I thank the hon. Lady for giving way and for introducing the Bill. The use of glue traps sounds like a completely gruesome practice, and I am glad that she is taking steps to minimise it. I am a bit confused about how the licences would work. Clause 2(2) states that the Secretary of State may grant a licence if

“there is no other satisfactory solution”,

which sounds as though there would be quite a detailed assessment of when it is and is not appropriate to use glue traps.

However, clause 2(1) suggests that licences are not granted to pest controllers for specific incidents—they would not go to the Secretary of State every time there was mouse to deal with. I am not quite sure how those two provisions work together. If a licence is already granted and the pest controller can use it, how can the Secretary of State consider whether glue traps are the only satisfactory solution for a particular incident? Sorry that question is a bit garbled—I hope it makes sense.

Jane Stevenson: Again, I agree that the detail on when licences are issued needs clarification, but in the case of a hospital power control room, for example, the licence would cover the location rather than one specific instance of infestation. Another example that has been raised is that of the aeroplane cockpit, where dealing with an infestation quickly is important. Whether licences would be granted to an airline, an airport or a hospital, for example, needs clarifying in coming legislation, on top of the Bill.

Some Members have expressed concern that the Bill will impair our ability to control rodent populations, but no evidence supports that. Both Ireland and New Zealand have banned glue traps but have not seen an increase in out-of-control rodent infestations. Alternative, similarly priced options are readily available. If we need to kill animals, surely we have a responsibility to do so as quickly and as humanely as possible. The licensing regime will ensure that glue traps are available as an option, in extreme circumstances, if they are needed to preserve public health or safety where there is no solution.

I thank all members of the Committee for being here. I also put on the record my thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth (Cherilyn Mackrory), who very ably and kindly stepped in for me when, sadly, my brush with covid prevented me from leading the Second Reading debate in the Chamber. I commend the Bill to the Committee, and I look forward to contributing further to drive up animal welfare standards in our country.

Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Member for Wolverhampton North East (Jane Stevenson) on her Bill making it this far. As I think she can hear, there is an awful lot of support for it.

As the hon. Lady highlighted, glue traps are an inhumane and cruel form of pest control. Once an animal is trapped, it faces prolonged suffering until it is put out of its misery or dies of hunger or dehydration. An animal caught on a glue trap can be left unchecked for between three and 24 hours—or even longer—before dying. As she said, between 2016 and 2020, the RSPCA received 236 reports of glue trap incidents involving animals for which the traps were not intended—the story of the cat is just horrific. Additionally, there is no guarantee that traps will actually catch the animals for which they are intended, and we know that they cause misery for animals that are trapped unintentionally.

There are more humane traps for when pest control is required. I welcome the Bill’s proposal for a public ban on glue traps. I heard what the hon. Lady said about specific circumstances, and I hope that the Minister will say more about that.

The proposals would make provision for glue trap licences to be granted to

“all pest controllers, a class of pest controllers or a particular pest controller”

and

“to be valid for the period specified in the licence”,

only where

“there is no other satisfactory solution.”

Those conditions are welcome, but I urge the Minister to do better. The RSPCA says that it would like the exemptions to be clarified and loopholes tightened so that the law can be as effective as it can be.

The primary offence in clause 1 is setting a glue trap to capture a rodent, and the following offences focus on rodents; however, other animals can get caught in glue traps, usually by accident. I would like the offence to become less specific. The RSPCA suggests that the best way of doing that is by changing the word “rodents” to “vertebrates”.

In New Zealand, as the hon. Lady said, the law requires individual users to apply for a licence on a case-by-case basis. Prospective licence holders should be required to provide evidence that they are adequately qualified in the use of glue traps, that there is a public interest, and that the traps will be used only as a last resort after other methods have been considered. Will the Minister provide assurances that there will be similar oversight of the licences, and strong criteria to ensure that all licences granted will be time limited and situation specific?

Organisations such as Humane Society International are calling for a more specific and narrow definition of a pest controller in the legislation. My right hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside spoke about that. The proposed definition is

“a person—

(a) who, in the course of a business, provides a service which consists of, or involves, pest control, or

(b) is employed by a public authority to carry out pest control.”

Humane Society International argues that a pest controller must be defined as someone who is also appropriately trained to provide such services, to ensure that glue traps do not continue to be misused by amateur or incompetent users.

Finally, we should aim to ensure that the public will be aware of the new law, and that the sale of glue traps is monitored so that people cannot buy a trap that they cannot use.

Mark Tami: On that point, I have just gone on eBay, where there are many listings of glue trap. These things are not easy, but we need assurances that something will be done about that. It is one thing banning it, but if people can get the traps, which are often produced in China or somewhere else, they will still be used.

Sarah Champion: My right hon. Friend makes a valid point that we keep raising. We make laws here, but unless the Government make the public aware and produce supporting guidance, the crime can continue and people argue that they did not know.

Jane Stevenson: I raised that matter as the Bill was being drawn up. I think the issue was with the devolved Administrations. Given that people could easily purchase glue traps from Scotland, Wales or other sources, it was difficult to ask for the Bill to be drafted to ban the sale of them. However, I know that in Wales and Scotland there are moves to ban glue traps. I hope that at a future date the legislation, when it is aligned, will ban the sale of glue traps, rather than just the current proposals.

Sarah Champion: The hon. Lady will be aware that there are many examples of where we lead and, unfortunately, Scotland does not always follow the common-sense approach—[*Laughter.*] All that said, I

[Sarah Champion]

am so pleased that the law will reduce the use of glue traps and the unnecessary suffering of animals. The change is very popular with the British public. A 2015 YouGov poll found that 68% of the British public agree that glue traps should be banned in the UK, so will the Minister agree to make the law as strong and as robust as possible?

1.45 pm

Jerome Mayhew (Broadland) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Dowd. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton North East. What a great addition to our legislation the Bill will make when, as I hope, it becomes an Act. I have been persuaded by the arguments on Second Reading about the cruelty of glue traps that their use should be limited. I know that she is aware of my support for the purposes of the Bill.

However, I have one concern about the drafting, which I raised in the House on Second Reading, relating to clause 1(5). It states:

“A person commits an offence if the person—(a) finds a glue trap in England that has been set in a manner which gives rise to a risk that a rodent will become caught in the glue trap,”—

in other words, one that has been set and is active—

“and (b) without reasonable excuse, fails to ensure that the glue trap no longer gives rise to such a risk.”

I have in mind the innocent bystander or passer-by who comes across a glue trap that they did not set, perhaps because they are not the owner of the premises. The clause, as currently drafted, creates a presumption of guilt against the finder. In harsh terms, it shifts the burden of evidence away from the prosecution to establish their motives, to the defendant to establish reasonable excuse and to explain why they did not take effective steps to put the glue trap out of commission.

My question, which I hope the Minister will be able to address in her remarks, is what would amount to a reasonable excuse under this drafting? Would ignorance of the law relating to pest control amount to a reasonable excuse? Although many of our constituents are well versed in the legislation around pest control, some are not. In fact, I would suggest that 99% of those innocent bystanders or passers-by would have no idea if a glue trap is an illegal device and whether its application in that context is licensed or otherwise.

Kerry McCarthy: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has raised this point, because I had that flagged as a concern as well. For a start, what does “finds a glue trap” mean? Someone renting a holiday cottage on a farm, riding a horse at a stables or renting an office might come across one. There are so many circumstances in which it would be absolutely nothing to do with them and they would be in no way culpable by being there.

There is also knowing what to do. When the clause says

“fails to ensure that the glue trap no longer gives rise to such a risk”

it sounds as if the person that finds it is expected to dismantle it. Most people would not have the slightest idea how to go about that safely.

Jerome Mayhew: I am grateful for that intervention; we clearly agree with each other. I do not want to put unnecessary barriers in the way of the progression of this Bill—we want it to have a following wind—but there appears to be cross-party concern that the wording might need to be tightened up, or at least that explanations as to what might amount to a reasonable excuse should be given.

Mr Gagan Mohindra (South West Hertfordshire) (Con): Thank you for the honour of serving in this debate, Mr Dowd. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton North East (Jane Stevenson) on her private Member’s Bill reaching Committee. I attended its Second Reading on 19 November last year and greatly enjoyed the contributions of many Members, and was glad to hear the Government support for the Bill.

In the United Kingdom, we are rightly proud of the welfare standards for animals. The Brexit dividend has enabled us to continue to advance our world-leading animal welfare standards. Future legislation will introduce strong legal protections for all animals and ban the use of inhumane glue traps.

Pest control is necessary as pests can be a huge threat to public health, but they should be captured and controlled as humanely as possible. Other traps, such as snap or break back, are more humane, cost effective and reusable. Glue traps inflict slow, painful deaths on animals that have been captured, and do not just target rodents because other wildlife can be caught by these indiscriminate traps. They are described by many as one of the cruellest forms of rodent control. Therefore, I support the ban on this mechanism. Ireland and New Zealand already have bans and have transitioned seamlessly.

In my eyes, people with professional pest control licences should be able to continue to purchase these traps, because they are qualified to use them. The pest control industry is evolving as people become more aware of animal sentience and the need to treat all animals humanely. I welcome this legislation, and I once again applaud my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton North East for introducing it.

Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship this afternoon, Mr Dowd. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton North East for raising this important issue and for the constructive way she has worked with Opposition colleagues. I commend her, because she has secured what the authors of so many private Members’ Bills really want—the elusive support of Her Majesty’s Government. I hope she will share any tips on how she has achieved that.

This has been a busy week for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and its Ministers, and it is good to see the Minister in her place. It feels like only yesterday we were both on the Front Benches in the Chamber—oh, yes, it was only yesterday! We still welcome the Bill, as we did on Second Reading last year. In that debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Olivia Blake) noted that banning glue traps was supported by a range of campaigners, stakeholders and organisations. That support still stands today, and extends across the Opposition Benches.

We have had an excellent debate about positive and constructive ways to move forward today. My hon. Friends the Members for Rotherham and for Bristol East and my right hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside have all made constructive, helpful comments about enforcement, the scope of the Bill and the language, including the issuing of licences and the definition of pest control. We must nail down those important issues to ensure that the Act is as strong and powerful as possible. Will the Minister indicate what further thinking has taken place in the Department since Second Reading? We have not tabled any amendments at this stage, but we reserve the right to do so on Report. Much will depend on the Minister's response to the points raised today.

Issues about animal welfare, including the need for this Bill, have had a good hearing this week. We debated the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill yesterday and we await the next stage of the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill. Discussions are ongoing about that. That will help to put this Bill in context. These pieces of legislation demonstrate why we need to make this Bill fit for purpose, to ensure we are delivering the strongest possible animal welfare policy across the piece.

On enforcement, covered in clauses 4 to 6, we need to think about a joined-up approach with the devolved Administrations. We have all had discussions and thoughts about mice racing across the border between Wales and England, or the other way around, so I ask the Minister to address that point in her response. As a Welsh MP, I highlight that Members in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are no less passionate about care and welfare of animals. We want to be part of the solution. The Bill has our support.

I hope the Minister will reflect on colleagues' contributions as the Bill progresses through the House. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton North East has done many animals a service by bringing the Bill to this House. I thank her for doing so. I look forward to working with colleagues in making the Bill as strong and purposeful as possible.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Jo Churchill): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Dowd. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton North East for bringing forward this private Member's Bill, which is, as she said, so important for animal welfare. I join her in thanking my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth (Cherilyn Mackrory), who stood in for her when she had to take some time away from this place—although I know she was watching on. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton North East on progressing the Bill. As we have heard today, the measures are sensible. Everybody wants to stop the use of glue traps.

I thank all hon. Members for their contributions, and I thank the organisations that supported the introduction of the Bill; the hon. Member for Rotherham referred to some of them. I reassure her and other Committee members that one of the reasons for a two-year delay was to get this right; we needed those further conversations about how to do this most effectively. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton North East talked about new technology, such as pressure pads that inform someone electronically when an animal has been caught

in a trap, so that it can be dispatched as soon as possible. They are still in use; there is also the point about making sure, through licences, that we know where such devices are. That will have to be done in steps.

As the hon. Member for Newport West said, there is a challenge in that we are slightly out of step with the devolved Administrations. My offer to her before the sitting was to discuss how we can talk to the devolved Ministers with responsibility. On Second Reading, the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow said that she felt that the Scottish Government would be interested in looking at the matter.

Mark Tami: On pressure pads or humane traps, such as those where the mouse goes into a tube and can then be released, they are humane only if they are checked; otherwise, the mouse dies probably a far worse death than it would have under other trapping methods. That is why it is important that a licensed person checks the traps regularly, rather than thinking that they have done their job by setting the traps.

Jo Churchill: That is why we need to think about how we go forward with the licences, applications, resourcing and so on. It is arguably why there is a two-year delay. Once again, campaign groups have run a really good campaign challenging shops not to stock the traps. I take the point about the internet; it is a challenge. I also take the point that several hon. Members made about educating the public and ensuring general awareness. I will answer the inquiry of my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland more directly, but this also goes to his point: setting aside use of the traps by licensed operatives, once we have taken the items away, the likelihood of their being in places where they should not be is diminished.

Kerry McCarthy: E-scooters are not allowed to be used on the road or pavement, unless they are the rental ones, but more than 300,000 have been sold, and we know that they are used on the road. I have had an ongoing battle to determine whether it is the responsibility of shopkeepers, the police or whoever to make it clear to people that they are spending hundreds of pounds on something that they cannot use. If we are saying that people selling glue traps somehow have a role to play in preventing them from being sold to people without licences, I do not think that would really work.

Jo Churchill: I ask the hon. Lady to forgive me, if that is where she felt that I put the onus. I was not putting it on shopkeepers directly; that approach has to be part of a suite of approaches. As we have mentioned, these items are legally available because Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are not banning them. We cannot move forward until we are in lockstep. As and when that happens—hopefully we can discuss that—we can be more rigorous. Until then, with all due respect, our hands are tied when it comes to making the law more definitive. On education and making people aware, I take on board the point that, although some of our constituents are pest control experts, especially it seems in rural constituencies, many will not be aware.

The right hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside asked whether pest controllers will have to demonstrate evidence of training or competence. There is no recognised training or accreditation that can be relied on to define who is competent in the use of glue traps, but it is not necessary

[Jo Churchill]

to specify that in the Bill, as the Secretary of State has discretion to grant licences to particular pest controllers and certain classes of pest controller, and to impose a condition on any licensee. That includes a requirement to have attended training and for a company's operatives to be trained in the appropriate way to use glue traps. That would allow licences to be granted only to pest controllers who have completed certain training, or can demonstrate that competency, which I think is what everybody wants. That is why further conversations about how this is set up are important.

2 pm

I was asked which bodies might be responsible for the licensing functions and why they were not named. The public authority to which we expect to delegate the licensing function is Natural England, as it already fulfils this function for licensing relating to wildlife management. However, there may be a change in remit and responsibilities, and there may be other public bodies, so the provision in the Bill is to appoint a competent public authority, and clause 2 allows for that flexibility.

I was asked whether the Government will monitor the number of glue traps, licences and applications. Yes, we would expect the licensing authority—Natural England, for the sake of this discussion—to introduce monitoring of the number of licences and applications approved. As I said, I would like this to be digital and transparent, so that people can look at the figures.

I was asked who would be authorised to inspect, and whether they would need to give notice before inspection. They will be appointed by the Secretary of State, and we expect that they will be employed by Natural England. Inspectors will be authorised to inspect pest controllers who permitted to use glue traps—they will be a known quantity, because they will be using the traps under licence—to ensure that licence conditions are being fulfilled.

The hon. Member for Rotherham asked about those broader arrangements and why there was not more specificity. As a range of licences can be granted, the Secretary of State has the flexibility to grant the type of licence that is most suitable for the pest controller, given the intended use. Whatever form of licence is granted, the Bill makes it explicit that licences can be issued to pest controllers only on an exceptional basis. That is the point that I want to make. We want glue traps to be used in the most infrequent of circumstances, when no other method can be used.

Andrew Rosindell (Romford) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton North East on this excellent Bill, which I hope will be another advance in animal welfare in this country. On a point of clarification, obviously in kitchens there are sticky traps and fly rolls, which are used for food safety. Does this Bill have any knock-on effect on controlling insects? Will those methods end up being banned because of this legislation? Has that been taken into account?

Jo Churchill: No, this is about banning glue traps that capture animals. I will come on to why we have used the term “rodents” rather than “vertebrates”, but the Bill is specific to animals. There is no mission creep into other areas.

Although the Bill refers only to rodents, by default it will protect all other animals that are at risk from glue traps—we have been over this several times—because it will be an offence to set the trap

“in a manner which gives rise to a risk that a rodent will become caught”.

Examples were given of animals that might be caught; if a glue trap is not set for a rodent, it cannot catch a cat, a garden bird or any other mammal about which we might be concerned.

Finally, the hon. Member for Broadland talked about a person being found guilty of an offence if they found a trap but did not set it. The offence applies only if a person does not have a “reasonable excuse” for failing to remove the trap. A reasonable excuse explicitly includes reasonably believing that the trap was set under licence, as may well happen in some of the examples given of business premises.

Clause 1(5) is intended to close a potential loophole in which a person, having come across a glue trap that has been set by someone else, fails to remove it in circumstances where it would be reasonable for them so to do. The concept of “reasonable excuse” enables magistrates to decide on the facts of the individual case. It is a concept commonly used in criminal offences to allow magistrates to determine whether the defendant's actions warrant the imposition of criminal liability. For example, if someone were renting a holiday home, they would have no knowledge of a trap being laid. It would be for the owner of the holiday home to defend that action. A person who moves into premises and finds a glue trap there, however, is unlikely to have a reasonable excuse for not removing that trap. On the other hand, a passer-by is more likely to be able to provide a good excuse for not removing a glue trap that has been set. An example of a good excuse might be where removing a glue trap might be a cause of trespassing. The two-year delay allows for these items to be removed, so we should not have that problem, but I take on board the point made by Members from across the Committee about whether we should do more educationally, via organisations and so on, to ensure that the general public are better informed about the fact that these items will be banned and cannot be used other than by a licensed pest controller. I think that is a fair challenge.

As we have discussed, clause 1 sets out the offences relating to glue traps and makes it an offence to set a trap in England for the purpose, or in a manner that gives rise to the risk, of catching a rodent. The clause specifically refers to rodents, as I have said, because they are the primary target. We know that other small animals may get caught, but by default it is always about catching that rodent. If a glue trap was set to catch another animal, it would be likely to catch a rodent. With due respect, it is a bit of a circular argument.

Clause 2 sets out licensing provisions to allow the use of glue traps by professional pest controllers under certain exceptional circumstances, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton North East mentioned. A glue trap licence may be granted to a pest controller for the purpose of preserving public health or safety when no other satisfactory solution is available. I expect applications for such a licence to be few and far between. Licences may be subject to any condition specified. That will allow licences to be granted only to pest controllers who can demonstrate the evidence of

competence to which I referred earlier. It would also allow licences to impose a condition to safeguard the welfare of trapped animals, and conditions to do with monitoring, whether via electronic or other means.

Clause 3 sets out the offences in connection with glue trap licences. It replicates provisions relating to licence applications under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Clauses 4 and 5 set out the enforcement powers of constables and authorised inspectors. These inspectors may be authorised by the Secretary of State in a similar way to inspectors under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. The expectation is that they will be employed by the public body delegated with licensing functions, which in this case is likely to be Natural England. Authorised inspectors are granted powers to inspect the premises of pest controllers who have a glue trap licence in order to ensure that the conditions of that licence are being adhered to. Clause 6 sets out offences in connection with authorised inspectors; it replicates the provisions for wildlife inspectors set out in the aforementioned Act.

Clauses 7 to 10 consider who is liable if an offence is committed by a body corporate, and how the Act applies to the Crown. The clauses define various terms used in the Bill and set out its extent, commencement and short title. The offences in clause 1 are expected to commence two years after Royal Assent; that gives individuals and businesses sufficient time to transition to alternative methods of rodent control, and provides ample time to put in place a suitable licensing regime, in discussion with stakeholders such as Natural England and the bodies that we have mentioned in proceedings on the Bill.

I thank Committee members for their comments and their support thus far, and I commend the Bill to the House.

Jane Stevenson: I will finish by thanking everyone for their contributions. We have had an interesting debate, and some important points were made about ensuring that the Bill achieves its intended purpose.

I could not close the debate without again thanking the animal welfare organisations that have been in close contact. We had a Zoom meeting with, I think, a dozen animal welfare organisations, which have been incredibly supportive. I thank them for their work in getting the Bill to this stage. There are probably too many to mention, but the list includes the RSPCA, Humane Society International, the UK Centre for Animal Law, Cats Protection, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Animal Aid.

I have a special word for the Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation; I spoke about this Bill at its event at our party conference, and speaking at the same event was Sir David Amess, who was such a champion of animal welfare. He will be hugely missed by those who support the cause of animal welfare, and it is for all of us to continue his amazing legacy.

I thank the Minister for working so kindly with me, for being patient, for supporting the Bill and for her explanation when she summed up. I also thank the team at DEFRA, the team in my office and you, Mr Dowd. There is nothing more to say, other than that I am very grateful for the support for this Bill. It is important that we get it on to the statute book, and that all the licensing regime issues are dealt with once the Bill has passed through the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 1 accordingly ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 2 to 10 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill to be reported, without amendment.

2.11 pm

Committee rose.

