

It is apparent from lower entry numbers and the lack of newcomers to working trials that the long-term future of the sport is not exactly guaranteed or looking healthy.

I fully appreciate that the KCLC has considered previous proposals re changes in working trials and can understand the reluctance to change anything based especially on forum chat, whether in Facebook or elsewhere, especially when there is often no knowledge as to that author's genuine interest in working trials and the reason they don't wish to participate.

I don't expect WT to be a universally popular sport – it probably takes more effort to train for WT than the majority, if not all other dog sports. Its standards for qualification is high – so it should be; that's where I get a huge sense of achievement and something to train towards.

However, we are in dwindling numbers and I respectfully propose that this is looked at in some depth by the LC, perhaps in a small working group. It needn't even be LC members (I think?) – it could be a combination of LC members and a couple of others in trials – preferably those who are open to all points of consideration and have the time, interest and enthusiasm to do this.

There are probably many reasons that trials numbers are in decline – new “easier” dogs sports (Rally/UK Tracking); others that probably offer more and easier training group opportunities (obedience/agility/IPO); more detailed analysis and awareness of dogs' anatomy which causes people concern over the jumps; the fact that those professions who used to embrace most of WT (i.e. police) no longer support certain jumps (scale) and use an alternative (A Frame); people working more and unable to commit the required time; lack of knowledge or understanding of working trials; the expense of travelling to train or compete; the lack of opportunity and progression for small dogs; no real interest shown by the KC in promoting WT (a friend's daughter joined YKC last year and in the resulting information pack she received everything you could do with your dog, agility obedience heel work to music cani- cross but nothing on working trials!!) I don't wish to propose an immediate reaction to suddenly drop an exercise or change a regulation without the change being backed up by facts following an evaluation of some sort.

I feel that the whole situation should be looked at with a view to ensuring that the future of working trials is positive. I propose that thorough and constructive research is done to gauge reasons as to the decline, why people are reluctant to either continue or join working trials and what can be done to offer a more popular future for WT, even if this does mean changes to certain rules and regs which may be accepted and required to ensure the sports long term future.

Research can be done via questionnaires etc to all WT Society members (and committees – it would be interesting to ascertain the success of the Intro Stake and special stakes), other dog sports memberships, those who attend WT training classes and others (potentially Social Media – Working Trials Info website/Facebook – Mark Skillen is willing to assist with research), hopefully gauging genuine opinions of those already in trials and those who are interested but not participating in any way.

Respectfully submitted for consideration Lorna Cottier