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For immediate Issue

MAN JAILED FOR SETTING FIRE TO DOG

A man who admitted setting fire to a family's pet dog and his friend who admitted perverting the course of justice were both jailed today at Belfast Crown Court.

Andrew Richard Stewart was sentenced to 20 months imprisonment, which includes a licence period of 10 months for causing unnecessary suffering to a collie dog, known to his owners as Cody, contrary to Art 4(1) of the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011. He was also disqualified from owning or keeping any animal for a period of 30 years and an order of compensation in the sum of £2,600 has been made to Cody's owners.

Jamie Downey was sentenced to six months imprisonment for the offence of Perverting the Course of Justice.

Commenting on the custodial sentences in relation to Stewart, Marianne O'Kane, Regional Prosecutor (eastern) of the Public Prosecution Service, said: "This case was a shocking and deliberate act of animal cruelty. The custodial sentence reflects the serious nature of the offences carried out by the defendant."

She added: "The PPS pursued the prosecution of this case against both defendants with rigour and sought the strongest possible sanction for the offences. It is our hope that the sentences awarded will act as a powerful deterrent to others.

"We can assure the public that we will continue to effectively prosecute animal abuse cases, where there is sufficient evidence and it is in the public interest.

"We will continue to work collaboratively with police to build robust cases that can be placed before the Courts so as to prosecute and deter those who engage in such grave acts of animal cruelty."

ENDS

Notes to Editor:

1. The PPS is the principal prosecuting authority in Northern Ireland. In addition to taking decisions as to prosecution in cases investigated by the police in Northern Ireland, it also considers cases investigated by other statutory authorities, such as HM Revenue and Customs.
2. The Public Prosecution Service is regionally based, with four regions in total, each coterminous with one or more divisions. Each region is headed by a Regional Prosecutor (Assistant Director of Public Prosecutions) who has overall responsibility for decision making on investigation files and for the conduct of prosecutions in that region. Additionally, there are also a number of Sections, each headed by an Assistant Director, which deal with specialised or complex areas of work, these include; Central Prosecutions, Fraud and Departmental, Policy and High Court and International.

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