



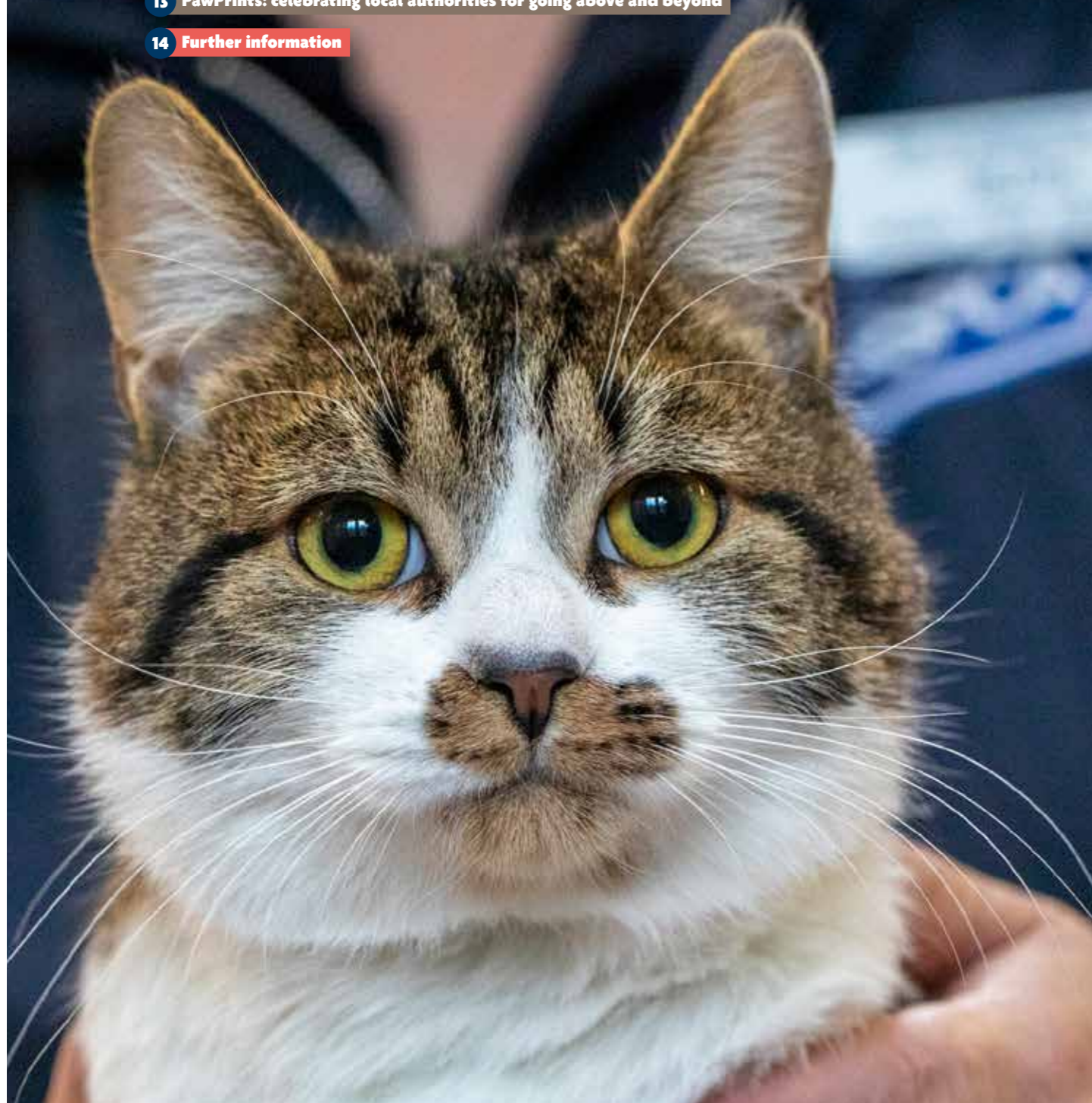
Our manifesto provides information, tools, and the confidence for you to take action locally to protect and promote animal welfare – inspiring your community to respect and treat animals with kindness and compassion.

# A local voice for animals:

Animal welfare manifesto for local government

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## Working together for animal welfare

“We have a proud history of leading from the front on animal welfare in the UK. Last year, we celebrated 200 years since the first piece of animal welfare legislation in the UK – and the world – was passed.

We’ve had landmark legislation, such as the Animal Welfare Act 2006, the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021 and Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2022. We can be proud of our achievements for animal welfare.

However, animal cruelty still exists. We receive around 90,000 calls to our cruelty line every month and investigate 6,000 reports of deliberate animal cruelty. We have a long way to go until all animals are respected and treated with kindness and compassion.

Local authorities are responsible for enforcing swathes of animal welfare legislation and have a critical role with us on the front lines, but that work is under threat – and so too is animal welfare. If we are to reduce and eliminate animal neglect and cruelty, we need your help.

Pet owners are struggling with the cost of living, facing tragically tough decisions about whether to heat their homes or feed their pets, causing a spike in animal abandonment. By working together, we can keep pets at home with their loving owners.

Many pets of people vulnerable and hospitalised are left alone, without their welfare needs being met. We’re still exploiting animals for our entertainment, with pets still given away as prizes. We need better protection for animals and the vulnerable in our community, with more controls for loud and unpredictable fireworks.

These are huge challenges. Many local authorities are facing these challenges head-on – going above and beyond for animal welfare. We’re proud to recognise them as part of our PawPrints award scheme, the only one of its kind in England and Wales.

By working together for animal welfare, we can overcome these challenges and inspire our communities to respect and treat animals with kindness and compassion. Thank you for all that you do locally to protect and improve animal welfare.”

*Chris Sherwood*

**Chris Sherwood,  
RSPCA Chief Executive**





Our vision is a world where all animals are respected and treated with kindness and compassion. Our mission is to ensure animals have a good life by rescuing and caring for those in need by advocating for all animals and inspiring others to support our vision.

Our eight ambitions are bold but achievable. But we know we can't achieve them alone. We need you to work together with us to:

- 1 **Reduce animal neglect and cruelty by 50%**
- 2 **Stop illegal puppy and kitten trading**
- 3 **See more than half of all UK farmed animals reared to RSPCA welfare standards**
- 4 **End severe suffering for animals used in science**
- 5 **Secure legal protection for animals and establish an Animal Protection Commission**
- 6 **Achieve statutory powers in England and Wales for RSPCA inspectors**
- 7 **Secure a UN declaration for animals**
- 8 **Inspire one million-strong movement for animal welfare by 2030**

By building strong partnerships and working together, the RSPCA, local authorities and councillors can protect and promote animal welfare and make a positive difference for animals and humans.

Using our manifesto – A Local Voice for Animals – you can be a champion for animals, inspiring your communities to respect animals and treat them with kindness and compassion.

**We're a nation of animal lovers: 36 million of us in the UK are willing and able to help animals – and expect our governments to as well.**

**Pet owners are struggling: over a quarter of pet owners are worried about being able to care for their pets.**

**A significant majority of UK adults expect governments across the country, at all levels, to protect animal welfare.**

## Supporting pets, their owners, and other animals



Working together to support pet owners and help keep their loving pets at home

The economic challenges many people face are having a direct impact on the welfare of their pets and other animals.

As families struggle to pay for their energy and food costs, they also have to make tragically tough decisions about their ability to look after and keep hold of their pets.

**Animal abandonments have increased by a quarter and reports of animal neglect have increased by 13%.**

Over 700 pets are waiting to come into RSPCA care, just as more are, sadly, abandoned. Rehoming is also slowing down – animals finding new homes has fallen by 8%.

Our officers out on the ground are seeing more and more people struggle and are too often seeing owners who cannot afford vet care or feed their pets.

**The RSPCA believes no animal should pay the price of the cost of living crisis. We want to keep as many pets and animals with their loving owners as possible.**

Our Cost of Living Hub offers pet owners advice and resources for pet food, health, insurance, and blogs and articles with more handy tips and tricks.

**We are working in partnership with public-sector and not-for-profit organisations to provide advice, information and support for struggling pet owners.**

Our support includes establishing a grant scheme for smaller rescue centres to maximise capacity, a Pet Food Bank Partnership scheme to distribute pet food donations to food banks and a vet voucher scheme for those most in need.

### Local authorities and councillors can help us keep pets at home by:

- Sharing details of our cost of living support and signposting to our Pet Food Banks to **support struggling pet owners.**
- Promoting an 'adopt don't stop' message among residents and asking them to consider participating in a foster scheme to **maximise rescue capacity.**
- Considering animals in strategies to support residents during the crisis to **keep pets with their loving owners.**



## Protecting the vulnerable when they need help – and their pets

### Working together to protect the vulnerable and their pets

All of us wish to protect the most vulnerable in our communities. For us, that also includes the pets of the most vulnerable – who often play a crucial role in supporting physical and mental health and wellbeing.

**Our nation is a community of animal lovers, including pets of the vulnerable. In their time of need, we must also protect their pets.**

Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities in England and Wales have a statutory duty to take into their care any pets of someone who is hospitalised (or otherwise not returning to their home) that cannot be cared for by family or relatives.

Many local authorities aren't aware of their legal duties and there is a wide disconnect between different agencies and organisations, putting animal welfare at risk.

**The RSPCA believes that no animal should be abandoned, especially the pets of the most vulnerable in society.**

We want to work together with local authorities and other relevant agencies to ensure the welfare of pets of the most vulnerable is consistently protected.

We cannot directly support local authorities in this area as our limited resources are directed at rescuing and rehabilitating animals who have suffered cruelty and neglect.

However, we've been working in partnership with local authorities, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and the North West Ambulance Service, and are now in the final stages of publishing a package to support local authorities and relevant agencies.

#### Local authorities and councillors can help us protect the vulnerable and their pets by:

- Ensuring local authorities are adhering to their legal responsibility under the Care Act 2014 to **protect the welfare of the pets of people hospitalised.**
- Promoting our Pets of People Hospitalised package to **support under-pressure staff and improve consistency and collaboration.**



## **Their pain, our gain – stop exploiting animals for our entertainment**

### Working together to stop the exploitation of animals

It's 2023, yet we're still seeing the cruel and outdated practice of pets awarded as prizes. Many people still let off sky lanterns – causing harm and suffering to animals and damaging our farmed and natural land – and super-loud fireworks, which can cause pain and stress for animals and the vulnerable in our communities.

**It's time to stop exploiting the pain and suffering of animals for our entertainment; it's cruel and outdated.**

#### **Pets as prizes**

Many animals are still given away as prizes, mostly goldfish given away at fairs. While they make great pets, many don't get that chance and die before their new owners get them home.

Many think it's a thing of the past, but sadly, that isn't the case. While in Scotland it's an offence, in England and Wales it's only an offence to give pets as a prize to anyone under 16.

**We want to see pets as prizes outlawed, once and for all.**

çSky lanterns cause serious harm and animal suffering. Not only are sky lanterns dangerous to both wild and farmed animals, but they also pose a serious fire risk to our natural and farmed lands.

**We're working together with the National Farmers' Union (NFU) and local authorities to ban the release of sky lanterns.**

#### **Fireworks**

While a staple activity in many of our calendars, fireworks can cause significant injury, problems and fear to animals and vulnerable people. They might be fun to look at, but we mustn't forget they're also loud and unpredictable.

**Animals can have a sudden and adverse reaction to fireworks, causing harm, injury and suffering. The same is true for our vulnerable family, friends, and neighbours – particularly the veteran community.**

In Scotland, recent legislation introduced 'firework control zones' to protect certain parts of the community, but England and Wales are falling behind. We want similar legislation in Westminster, but we're also working with local authorities and councillors to raise awareness and inspire our communities to consider others, including animals.

31 councils in England and Wales have banned pets as prizes on public land, more than 200 have banned the release of sky lanterns, and over 70 are using our fireworks toolkit package to raise awareness of the impact of fireworks and provide information and support for pet owners.

#### **Local authorities and councillors can help us stop the exploitation of animals by:**

- **Protecting animals and the environment** by supporting our suggested motion to ban pets as prizes and the release of sky lanterns on council-owned land.
- **Supporting animals and vulnerable people** in the community by using our toolkit and supporting our suggested motion calling on the UK Government to introduce new legislation to limit their sales period, introduce 'control zones', a licensing regime and limits on the maximum noise levels.



## Improving animal welfare enforcement

### Working together to improve animal welfare enforcement

We value local authorities and their role in protecting and promoting animal welfare; they're with us every day at the forefront of enforcing animal welfare legislation.

From providing a stray dog service to prosecuting illicit puppy traders and licensing activities involving animals, local authorities are crucial partners working to protect and promote animal welfare.

**However, like many others, local authorities are struggling to make ends meet. Many are cutting back in the face of serious economic challenges, and others resort to offering bare minimum services.**

While we welcome and support additional animal welfare legislation from Westminster, such as the promised and yet-to-be-passed Kept Animals Bill, we're concerned about the effectiveness of enforcing existing animal welfare legislation.

Additional enforcement tools – such as penalty notices – are welcome, but they won't end the postcode lottery of animal welfare enforcement services across England.

Last year, APGAW, in partnership with the RSPCA, the Local Government Animal Welfare Group, and other animal welfare organisations, published the 'Improving the Effectiveness of Animal Welfare Enforcement' report.

**The report highlights the inconsistency of services people can rely on locally from their council for enforcing animal welfare.**

The RSPCA supports the contents and recommendations of the report, which calls for more support for councils to use dedicated, well-trained animal welfare officers to enforce the plethora of legislation impacting animals.

We're working closely with APGAW and other animal welfare organisations on the next stages of the report. You can read the report on APGAW's website.

Much more can be done to build a collaborative partnership, such as establishing regional animal welfare forums with councils, the RSPCA, the police and other bodies in the community.

#### Local authorities and councillors can help us improve animal welfare enforcement by:

- Protecting funding of animal welfare services at a local authority level to **protect and promote animal welfare.**
- Implementing a shared services model by pooling resources and expertise to **tackle the illicit puppy trade, improve animal welfare enforcement and reduce animal cruelty.**
- Supporting and implementing further recommendations of APGAW's report to **improve the effectiveness of animal welfare enforcement.**



## PawPrints: celebrating local authorities

### for going above and beyond

Working together to raise animal welfare standards and share best practice



Local authorities are at the forefront of animal welfare in England and Wales. They stand with us every single day to protect and promote the welfare of animals.

Responsible for enforcing a swathe of animal welfare legislation and delivering a plethora of animal welfare services, such as stray dog provisions and licensing of activities involving animals, they are crucial partners in helping us on our mission.

**Many are doing amazing work – often in the face of steep challenges – and we're proud to recognise them through our PawPrints award scheme.**

Since 2008, the PawPrints award scheme has recognised and celebrated local authorities (and other public sector organisations) for going above and beyond statutory responsibilities to deliver world-class animal welfare services.

**The only award scheme of its kind, PawPrints is a unique opportunity for local authorities to be recognised by the RSPCA for their animal welfare services.**

It's an opportunity for local authorities to demonstrate their commitment to protecting and promoting animal welfare in their communities – which benefits us all. It is also an invaluable chance to inspire others to think about their animal welfare services and encourage decision-makers to consider and value the vital role local authorities play in protecting animal welfare.

With five different categories, the PawPrints gives local authorities the chance to sweep up bronze-, silver-, or gold-level awards for stray dog provisions, licensing of activities involving animals, housing, contingency planning and kennelling. Local authorities can enter to receive more than one award in multiple categories to properly recognise and value the wide variety of animal welfare services they deliver.

Last year, we handed out over 70 awards to over 50 different public sector organisations, and since 2008, we've given nearly 1,500 awards.

**We're proud to work together with all those who have entered before. We want more to enter and be in with the chance to receive a prestigious PawPrint.**

We know our partnerships with local authorities and other public sector organisations are integral to reclaiming the UK's place as the global leader in animal welfare.

We know there is so much more we can achieve by working together for animal welfare. We can create a world where all animals are respected and treated with kindness and compassion.

**Local authorities and councillors can help us raise standards and share best practice by:**

- Encouraging your local authorities' licensing, stray dog, contingency planning and housing teams to **enter the RSPCA's PawPrints award scheme.**
- Promoting PawPrints more widely among your community; helping us reach more public sector organisations to **provide information and knowledge to raise animal welfare standards.**



## Further information

There is so much more we can do for animal welfare by working together and building collaborative partnerships between agencies and organisations. While we've detailed five key issues in this manifesto, there is more you can do to protect and promote animal welfare.

From disrupting and banning trail hunting on council-owned land – often used as a smokescreen for hunting foxes – to designing procurement policies to promote the use of high-welfare, sustainable food, you are in a unique position to take action locally to significantly improve animal welfare.

If you want any more information about the issues above, would like to discuss how you can take more action, or for any other enquiries, please email [politicalaffairs@rspca.org.uk](mailto:politicalaffairs@rspca.org.uk)

Please support our manifesto by using our shareable social graphics and using the hashtag **#LocalVoiceForAnimals** on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. On Twitter, tag both our team ([@RSPCA\\_PATeam](https://twitter.com/RSPCA_PATeam)) and the RSPCA ([@RSPCA\\_Official](https://twitter.com/RSPCA_Official)), and stay updated on our work by following us.

We also have lots of information, resources, and advice on our Political Animal Website (PAW) – a dedicated, one-stop resource for the public sector.

 [politicalaffairs@rspca.org.uk](mailto:politicalaffairs@rspca.org.uk)

 [www.politicalanimal.rspca.org.uk](http://www.politicalanimal.rspca.org.uk)

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**Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals**

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