



RSPCA Cymru

Local Action for Animals

Together for Animal Welfare

Local authorities are at the forefront of animal welfare in Wales - and RSPCA Cymru is proud to work closely with Cabinet Members, Councillors, enforcement officers and others in local government to make our communities a better place for animals to live.

Our dedicated frontline officers work with local authorities across Wales every single day to help animals; and we highly value our relationship with elected members and officials as local authorities develop policies and procedures to support animals in their communities. But we know these are challenging times too for Wales' councils, as we begin the recovery from the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Local authorities are having to do so much more with limited resources. With animal welfare, there's further enforcement expectations on the way, including via the UK Government's Kept Animals Bill, and expected future extension of the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021, to name just two. Our new strategy, *Together for Animal Welfare*, sets out our bold ambitions for 2030 - and partnership working is central to our aims, including reducing animal neglect and cruelty by half, and stopping the illegal puppy and kitten trade. We can achieve so much more together for animal welfare; and we know our ongoing partnerships with Wales' councils will be integral to making this nation even more compassionate and kinder to animals.

This living document aims to provide policy support to councils in the coming years - celebrating some of the steps already taken in Wales; and making proposals and suggestions for how local authorities can further utilise their limited resources to improve animal welfare. It will complement our dedicated PawPrints scheme, which recognises the very best practice from local authorities; in addition to the resources on our PoliticalAnimal website; and we hope will inspire decision-makers in councils on the further policy steps they can take in the interests of our fellow living creatures. We look forward to discussing with you how we can work together to make Wales an even better place for animals to live.



Chris Sherwood - RSPCA chief executive

More support is needed for Wales' local authorities



Wales' local authorities play a vital role in the enforcement of a number of animal welfare laws despite facing considerable budget and resource challenges in recent years. RSPCA Cymru has long called for greater investment at a local authority level so that councils can properly enforce the law and protect animal welfare as intended. Sadly, a 'postcode lottery' of animal welfare services across Wales from the public sector is increasingly evident, as well as a lack of financial and physical resources. While the Welsh Government's local authority enforcement project that will run until 2023 is much welcome, it is crucial that adequate funding is also provided to ensure that Wales' already-overstretched local authorities are able to properly enforce current and incoming animal welfare legislation.

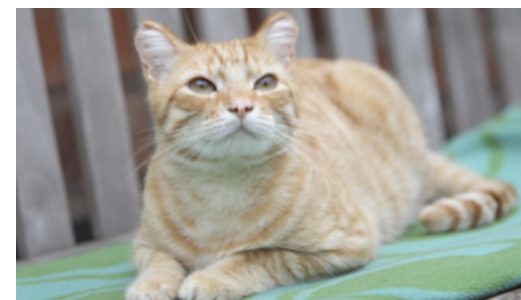
Following the publication of the Welsh Government's Animal Welfare Plan for Wales, it is expected that Wales' 22 local authorities will become responsible for the enforcement of additional animal welfare legislation and regulations before 2026; while new powers are also anticipated for Wales' councils once the UK Government's Kept Animals Bill comes into law. The Welsh Government granting formal powers to RSPCA inspectors under the Animal Welfare Act, which provides the legal basis for around 85 percent of investigations for animal cruelty, could help relieve the pressure on statutory bodies as their workload increases over the coming years.

An independent review of the RSPCA's prosecution activity in 2014 recommended that our officers be appointed as Inspectors under the Animal Welfare Act¹, to bring the RSPCA in line with other similar organisations across the British Isles. In 2019, RSPCA Cymru issued a report to the Welsh Government concerning what powers it might be appropriate to formally give the charity's officers and we hope a response to this review will soon be forthcoming, prioritising how this could benefit Wales' local authorities from a financial and workload perspective, while helping to ensure that at risk animals are able to be rescued more quickly. The RSPCA would welcome the continued support of local authorities for RSPCA officers to be recognised in this way - in a move we feel will relieve some of the pressures presently faced by local authorities in Wales with regards to animal welfare.

¹ The independent review of the prosecution activity of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, September 2014

PawPrints scheme - celebrating local authority good practice

Since 2008, our annual PawPrints scheme has recognised and celebrated good practice from local authorities and other public bodies in relation to animal welfare by rewarding organisations who exceed basic and statutory service requirements with the aim of achieving higher animal welfare standards. PawPrints covers five areas of work: stray dog services, housing, contingency planning, kennelled dog and animal activity licensing, with each award having three levels that carry progressively more demanding criteria. Applications for the awards usually open in the summer, but there are also other steps councils can take to make their housing services more pet-friendly - and we hope to engage even more councils with the scheme in the years which follow.



PSPOs should not unwittingly compromise dog welfare



Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014, local authorities in Wales have the power to introduce Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO). PSPOs target activities in a certain area which the local authority believes may have a detrimental effect on the quality of life - and this tool is frequently used in Wales with regards to dog control, and to tackle issues such as dog fouling.

Many councils have decided to ban dogs from being walked on marked sports pitches within a PSPO. The RSPCA fears such steps risk demonising responsible dog owners, limiting walking spots in Wales' communities and creating animosity between dog-owners and non-dog owners in a locality. Rather than excluding dogs from popular walking spots like marked sports pitches, the

RSPCA urges local authorities to use PSPOs to make any failure in the removal of dog faeces from land an offence and require all dog owners to carry an appropriate receptacle or bag to pick up dog faeces if their dog has defecated while they are out walking; as part of a wider strategy to encourage responsible ownership.

Due to the comfort and support that owners can receive from their dog, we urge local authorities not to use PSPOs to ban dogs from local cemeteries – but instead to require them to be kept on a lead in these spaces. Crucially, the local authority should ensure any authorised officer directing dog owners to take particular actions - such as requiring them to put their dog on a lead in certain situations - has the appropriate experience, knowledge and training to impose these conditions; and to ensure the welfare of the dog is not compromised. Indeed, RSPCA Cymru acknowledges that local authorities will need to ensure some areas require dogs to be kept on leads at all times - and such conditions are commonly laid out in PSPOs. Officers should also ensure any instruction to place dogs on a lead is supplemented with general advice that a dog should still be regularly exercised off the lead in other safe, appropriate situations.

Encouraging the responsible use of fireworks and sky lanterns

RSPCA Cymru has long called for greater action on fireworks and sky lanterns and has worked closely with Wales' local authorities to mitigate the risks these items pose to animal welfare. All 22 local authorities have banned the use of sky lanterns on council land following an RSPCA campaign, while 14 councils, including all in North Wales, have adopted our notice of motion on fireworks so far; aimed at boosting preparedness, public awareness and promoting alternatives.

Although sky lanterns look attractive, they can be very dangerous for animals, especially farm animals, equines and wildlife. Ingestion and entrapment are major risks from discarded sky lanterns, while they also pose a fire hazard to habitats, animal housing and feed storage.

While we continue to call for Wales-wide action on sky lanterns and for Welsh Government to ban them on all land, we are grateful that all 22 local authorities have taken action against them to help protect animals from the many risks associated with these devices - and hope local authorities will continue to promote the existence of these localised bans to raise awareness about the dangers of sky lanterns.

Over the last five years, the RSPCA has received almost 2,000 calls about fireworks across England and Wales, with stress, anxiety and fear a reality for many animals, especially around Bonfire Night, New Year's Eve, Diwali and Chinese New Year. As it stands, fireworks is a largely non-devolved issue with the existing legislation - the Fireworks Act 2003 and the Fireworks Regulations 2004 - introduced over 16 years ago, however there are numerous steps that local authorities can and have taken to further mitigate the potential impacts of fireworks on Wales'



pets, wildlife and livestock. These include requiring public displays to be advertised in advance, promoting public awareness campaigns about the risks associated with fireworks, writing to the Welsh and UK Government to call for improvements to the legislation relevant to fireworks and encouraging local suppliers to stock 'quieter' fireworks for public display. With there still being eight councils who haven't adopted our motion as of early 2022, we are looking forward to working with more local authorities in the near future to ensure that fireworks are able to be enjoyed responsibly and that they cause minimum harm to animals while also supporting those who have already taken some action to utilise their positions to promote the safe and responsible use of fireworks.

Ending pets as prizes



Sadly, it's still all too common to see pets - mainly goldfish - being given away as prizes at fairgrounds in Wales. With coronavirus restrictions eased, and fairgrounds returning to pre-pandemic levels, the RSPCA is concerned there'll be a surge in reports - with 144 calls received by the charity since 2015 about goldfish and other aquatic animals being given as prizes.

Animal ownership is a big responsibility, one that should be planned and well thought out. Goldfish are easily stressed and very often fish that are won as prizes suffer miserably from shock, oxygen starvation or as a result of changes in water temperature, with many dying before their new owners can get them home. People who are given goldfish as prizes do not normally have an aquarium set up so may keep them in unsuitable environments (such as fish bowls) and some fish may even get illegally dumped in local waterways.

RSPCA Cymru urges local authorities to ban the giving of live animals as prizes on council-owned land. Already, nearly one fifth of Wales' local authorities have taken this step - protecting the welfare of these animals and promoting a responsible approach to animals; consigning to the history books situations where the fate of a goldfish or another animal is decided by a game of chance.

Banning trail hunting on local land

In October 2021, the high-profile conviction of a senior huntsman highlighted how trail hunting has been used as a smokescreen for illegal fox hunting in recent years, much to the concern of the RSPCA. Major landowners such as Welsh Government-sponsored body Natural Resources Wales and the National Trust have since banned trail hunting on their land in Wales and we're now hoping that more major landowners, including local authorities, will do the same.



Trail hunting involves laying a predetermined trail for hounds to follow, using urine, body parts and carcasses from animals such as foxes, deer and hares. Despite the ban on traditional hunts, continuing to train hounds to follow such scents could lead to wild quarry animals such as foxes, deer and hares being disturbed, chased and killed if the dogs pick up the scent of a live animal on the trail. In addition, the hunts' dogs may well disturb non-targeted animals, such as cats, who then may also suffer from injury and stress. Despite these animal welfare concerns, trail hunting remains commonplace in Wales. Local authorities can act by banning trail hunting on council-owned land, and by promoting safer alternatives such as drag hunting instead.

Supporting pet-owning social tenants



As well as enforcing animal welfare legislation and licensing establishments and activities involving animals, local authorities provide accommodation for many pet owners and their beloved companion animals. From promoting the permanent identification and neutering of pets, to keeping a register of animals kept in housing controlled or influenced by the local authority or housing associations and establishing links with recognised animal welfare organisations, the RSPCA encourages local authorities in Wales to engage with the scheme to ensure social housing policies prioritise animal welfare.

For many, the lack of access for pets – particularly dogs – to homeless shelters, hostels and social housing can be a barrier to improving their own situation and standards of living. While all local authorities are required to produce a

homelessness strategy under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, research from the RSPCA suggests no homeless strategy currently published by a local authority in Wales makes references to pets or animal welfare. Because of this, we urge all local authorities in Wales to urgently consider the fate of pets in their statutory homelessness strategies to ensure the fear of losing pets is not providing a barrier to vulnerable individuals accessing local services.

As part of our long-running work with local authorities and housing associations across Wales to drive up standards and improve relationships between landlords and tenants, many of whom are responsible pet owners, the RSPCA has produced [our own model tenancy agreements](#), which councils can also adopt - or encourage local housing associations to adopt. By doing so, local authorities can ensure that more tenants can keep pets responsibly, while helping to reduce anti-social behaviour associated with animals and creating more harmonious relationships between pet owners and non-pet owners.

A look at licensing

Wales' local authorities ensure the welfare of the animals within their localities through licensing and inspecting businesses such as pet shops, riding schools, pet boarders, farms and dog breeders. In 2021, the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations was introduced meaning that anyone who wants to sell pets in Wales now has to meet minimum animal welfare standards, with a new licensing scheme also introduced for pet sellers. Puppies or kittens under six months of age not bred by the licence holder cannot be sold, unless by a legitimate rescue centre, and the law also states that puppies, kittens, ferrets or rabbits cannot be sold until they are at least eight weeks of age. This legislation will require local authorities to provide more data about the numbers of licenced premises in their localities and ensure that there is an increased understanding of the importance of animal welfare among sellers and breeders.

While this legislation and its accompanying guidance is much welcome, local authorities could go even further when licensing breeding activities by questioning whether adequate staffing and supervision, enhancement and enrichment programmes and opportunities for socialisation are being provided by breeders too - beyond statutory minimums. The current staff-to-dog ratio legally permits the possibility of a single individual providing the care for 20 adult dogs and their puppies at any one time - something the RSPCA and wider animal welfare sector have long flagged as a concern. While a ratio provides very clear parameters



to licensing officers and ensures each local authority is enforcing to the same standard, a flexible approach that goes beyond the standardised requirement could require the availability of adequately trained staff at all times to ensure that the welfare needs of the dogs at the establishment are truly met.

The ever-growing list of animal welfare laws



Wales' local authorities have responsibility for the enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, through the aforementioned licensing and regulation of businesses and activities involving animals, as well as devolved legislation such as the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021 and the Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014. Enforcing animal welfare legislation set by the Welsh Government is set to become an increasingly demanding task with local authorities set to get additional duties which could include the licensing of animal exhibit and animal welfare establishments along with the enforcement of CCTV in abattoirs, the compulsory microchipping of cats and more. The UK Government's Kept Animal Bill could also see councils become responsible for enforcing bans on primate ownership and improvements to

zoo regulations, as well as potentially needing to tackle livestock worrying, puppy smuggling and live exports too. With the list of animal welfare legislation ever growing, RSPCA Cymru believes there is a need for an urgent wholesale review concerning the ability of local authorities to enforce legislation that impacts upon the welfare of animals in Wales - and whether they are resourced appropriately to do this. Collaboration between local authorities and animal welfare organisations, and sharing the relevant observations with each other, could help ensure that the sector is able to take a united approach towards enforcement, while sharing the workload to further improving animal welfare in Wales.

Stray dogs

Local authorities have statutory responsibility for stray dogs - but service provision varies significantly across Wales. From scanning dogs (including deceased dogs) for microchips, to developing robust rehoming policies for unclaimed dogs and offering an out of hours service, there's a series of steps councils can take to ensure their stray dog services best protect welfare and promote responsible ownership.

The RSPCA recognises Wales' best stray dog services via its PawPrints scheme - and welcomes the opportunity to work with councils to ensure their stray dog provision is recognised, and achieves our science-based criteria through the PawPrints scheme; which we urge all local authorities in Wales to engage with.

Contingency Planning

Local authorities have clear roles and responsibilities with regards to emergency planning - including assessing risk, providing information and supporting communities. However, local authorities in Wales are not required by law to consider animal welfare as part of their contingency planning process; and policies vary considerably across the country.

Given that more than half of all households in Wales own at least one pet, many people may be unwilling to vacate or leave an emergency situation unless the welfare of their animals is guaranteed. The RSPCA believes it is vital that animals are a central focus in contingency plans - and recognises those councils delivering best practice via its PawPrints scheme.



From promoting preparedness, to working with animal welfare groups and running live exercises involving a pets element, proactive measures and planning can make all the difference for animals should disaster strike. The RSPCA hopes local authorities will engage with the Contingency Planning PawPrint, and ensure pets and other animals are a focal point of Wales' emergency planning.

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 - emergency boarding of animals

Under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, local authorities in Wales have a duty to make provision for the protection of property where local people are taken into hospital, or require care away from the home - and this includes care for their pets.

Unless family or friends can provide responsible care, the council should have a clear plan in place to make arrangements for the board and care for these animals; which must encapsulate guarantees that whoever cares for the animal will be duty bound under section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to ensure the welfare needs of the animal(s) are met. The RSPCA continues to liaise with public bodies to develop protocols to assist with this process; and we look forward to working with councils as they develop policies that ensure animals are boarded safely when animal owners are hospitalised or require care away from their home.

Equine welfare and utilising the Control of Horses (Wales) Act



The Control of Horses (Wales) Act gives all councils in Wales powers to deal with fly-grazed and abandoned horses. The Act essentially extended powers contained within previous local laws, including the Cardiff City Council Act, Mid Glamorgan County Council Act and the West Glamorgan Act, to all councils in Wales. It gives enforcers the powers to seize equines which are fly-grazing on common land without lawful authority, and those fly-grazing on private land without necessary consent.

However, since coming into force, concerns have been raised about how often the powers are utilised by different local authorities; and whether the powers are under-used across the board.

Fly-grazing, though not itself a direct welfare problem, is commonly associated with irresponsible ownership, which can subsequently cause a number of welfare problems such as failure to meet the welfare needs of the animals - so it is vital that local authorities are prepared to use these powers to deter illegal fly-grazing and hold irresponsible owners to account. RSPCA Cymru also urges neighbouring local authorities to co-operate and work with one another - and with animal welfare agencies - to ensure consistent enforcement.

Since February 2021, except a few derogations for certain wild and semi-wild equines living in specified areas, all horses, ponies and donkeys in Wales must also be microchipped and hold a valid passport - which is also enforced by local authorities. We hope local authorities will be able to devote enough capacity to ensure compliance with equine traceability and identification rules; giving this law the best chance to deal with irresponsible horse ownership and deter future horse crises.

Resources for local authorities

The RSPCA is proud of its long-running working relationship with local authorities and has created a variety of resources - beyond this live document - that Councillors, enforcement officers and other staff can use to support their animal welfare work, as well as their residents.

The [Puppy Contract](#) is a free tool designed by the RSPCA and the Animal Welfare Foundation to empower puppy buyers and help them to avoid the problems that can arise from buying a puppy from an irresponsible breeder. Local authorities can help with the promotion and distribution of this tool to help protect the residents from the activity of unscrupulous breeders.

Our [Political Animal](#) site contains all of our up-to-date briefings and information on a variety of topics related to animal welfare, which continue to prove useful for local authorities when seeking advice on issues relevant to companion and farmed animals, as well as wildlife.

We also have a dedicated cruelty number for local authorities should you ever need to get in contact with the RSPCA or report something to us - which our teams share with Wales' 22 local authorities.

Proposed Notice of Motions (NOMs)

Many councillors in Wales have proposed RSPCA-backed Notices of Motion to ensure a local authority acts on a particular subject - and makes a very public statement about its intentions. The RSPCA is eager to work with councillors on bringing such NOMs forward, and can provide bespoke and localised briefing material and provide support for Committees, Full Council and other parts of council business to progress positive policy change for animals.

Fireworks

This Council resolves:

- to require all public firework displays within the local authority boundaries to be advertised in advance of the event, allowing residents to take precautions for their animals and vulnerable people
- to actively promote a public awareness campaign about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people - including the precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks
- to write to the Welsh Government urging them to utilise any levers at their disposal to mitigate any negative impacts on animals and vulnerable people of the hosting of fireworks displays
- to write to the UK Government urging them to introduce legislation to limit the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays
- to encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock 'quieter' fireworks for public display

Pets as Prizes

This Council:

- is concerned about the number of cases reported to the RSPCA each year, regarding pets given as prizes via fairgrounds, social media and other channels in Wales
- is concerned for the welfare of those animals that are being given as prizes
- recognises that many cases of pets being as prizes may go unreported each year in Wales
- supports a move to ban the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on [Insert Council name]

The Council agrees to:

- ban outright the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on [insert Council name] land
- write to the Welsh Government, urging an outright ban on the giving of live animals as prizes on both public and private land in Wales