



Consultation Response

FROM THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS WALES DEPARTMENT

Consultation on Welsh Government's Environment Bill – White Paper

RSPCA Cymru welcomes the opportunity to respond to the White Paper consultation on the Welsh Government's Environment Bill.

The mission of the Society is to prevent cruelty, promote kindness to and alleviate suffering of all animals. As such, we approach all such discussions with this focus and, therefore, note that much of this consultation is not relevant to the RSPCA's sphere of work, and little of the proposals contained relate directly to animal welfare.

Certain proposals, however, included within the White Paper are of interest and have the potential to impact upon the welfare of animals, including through – though not limited to - the Society's retail operations, which play a key role in funding the Society's frontline work.

WASTE SEGREGATION

QUESTION 18: Do you agree with the proposals in chapter 4 and approach of combining the 5 measures together, in relation to regulation of waste segregation? Are there any other materials or waste streams which should be included in the requirements to sort and separately collect? If yes, what are they, and why should they be chosen?

QUESTION 19: Do you agree that the level of segregation asked of individually/businesses is acceptable? If no, please state why and an alternative.

Proposals of interest, notably, include those in relation to boosting recycling rates. The RSPCA is keen to promote the numerous avenues through which the public can recycle unwanted items by donating them to the Society, when they otherwise may have ended up in landfill. At a national and branch level, efforts are also made to ensure social obligations are met by recycling items appropriately.

The second proposal made by the Welsh Government for waste segregation places significant emphasis on the waste producer, by proposing to place a duty on all those other than households to present their recyclable wastes separately for collection. This would impact upon RSPCA offices, shops, clinics and animal centres.

Whilst seven separate waste streams is identified as a present consideration, the White Paper does not offer significant information as to the extent and scope of the waste segregation which producers will be expected to undertake. Further information on this is importance in determining whether any proposed changes would impact upon the Society's resources.

QUESTION 20: Are there any particular types of sizes of businesses where it would not be technically, environmentally or economically practicable to keep the 7 waste streams separate at source? If yes, please identify them and explain why.

We note - and welcome - that work is being undertaken this year by the Welsh Government concerning the impact this proposal may have on businesses. As part of this work, we would urge the Welsh Government to ensure that a specific assessment is made of the impact on third sector organisations and those which are heavily reliant on volunteers as part of their day-to-day activities; and whether - in these circumstances - this is the most appropriate avenue to boosting recycling rates.

CARRIER BAGS

QUESTION 29: Do you agree with the proposal to extend the enabling powers of the Welsh Ministers so that they may, be regulations, provide for minimum charges set for other types of carrier bags in addition to single use carrier bags?

The negative impact which discarded carrier bags can have on wildlife has been acknowledged. The International Coastal Clean-Up Report¹ stated, for example, as part of its 2004 survey that 2.2 per cent of animals found dead had been entangled in a plastic bag. Thus, the impact which the implementation of the single-use carrier bag charge has had on reducing their usage is a very positive development. However, as a consequence of this, the increased uptake of bags-for-life, often discarded prematurely by consumers, cannot be ignored.

It seems prudent, therefore, for the Welsh Government to have the ability to extend the charge to include other types of carrier bag, should consumer behaviour dictate.

QUESTION 30: Do you agree with the proposal to extend the enabling powers of the Welsh Ministers so that they may, be regulations, require retailers to pass on their net proceeds to any good causes?

Under existing arrangements, the animal welfare sector has the potential to receive a significant financial boost from retailers donating revenues raised accordingly. At both a national and branch level, the RSPCA runs a plethora of projects which would benefit immensely from receiving the proceeds of the carrier bag charge, and we remain eager to discuss opportunities with retailers across Wales.

Under current legislative provision, however, should the Welsh Government opt to make regulations that require sellers to use the net proceeds in a particular way, they may only do this for environmental good causes, which may preclude many, if not all, of the aforementioned animal welfare projects. Equally, it would seem very unfair for existing relationships between retailers and the third sector to be barred should the Welsh Government opt to utilise its enabling powers under the Climate Change Act 2008.

RSPCA Cymru is, therefore, supportive of enabling powers being extended so the Welsh Government could, by regulations, require retailers to donate net proceeds to *any* good cause, which could then include all animal welfare projects undertaken by the RSPCA at a branch and national level.

QUESTION 31: Do you have any comments on the impact of these proposals (for example, impacts on your organisation)?

Presently, it must be noted, single-use carrier bags donated to charity shops will not incur a charge as these have already been used and the tax paid on them. We would urge the Welsh Government to confirm its ongoing commitment to this principle and ensure it extends to include any bags other than single-use carrier bags which it may add to the scope of the present legislative arrangements in the future, as a consequence of the powers proposed by the White Paper.

FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

QUESTION 42: Do consultees have any other comments or useful information in relation to any of the proposals in this White Paper?

RSPCA Cymru understands that there may originally have been an intention to undertake a significant review of wildlife legislation as part of the Environment Bill, but that any such undertaking is now anticipated as a separate legislative development. A comprehensive review of wildlife legislation in Wales is necessary, and RSPCA Cymru looks forward to engaging closely with the Welsh Government as part of that process.

We note the White Paper also refers to the Welsh Government's broader legislative programme, such as the Planning Bill, with many other Bills likely to broadly impact upon the management of Wales' natural resources. RSPCA Cymru looks forward to offering significant input as part of the consultation and debate surrounding these Bills, including the need for the planning system in Wales to be reformed to recognise animal welfare as a material matter.

¹ International Coastal Clean-up, 2005. The International Coastal Clean up 2005 Report. Ocean Conservancy. See <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/desh/publications/091016wastebagreporten.pdf>