



RSPCA Anniversary strategic foresight research project

Request for Proposals

September 2022 (version 1)

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 About the RSPCA

Since 1824, the RSPCA has worked to prevent cruelty, promote kindness towards, and alleviate the suffering of animals by all lawful means available. The Society's vision is of a caring world where all animals are respected and treated with compassion.

The RSPCA is a registered charity (no. 219099) that could not exist without voluntary donations and legacies. It is a national society, covering England and Wales, with a main base just outside Horsham in West Sussex. It also has many other premises including regional support offices and more than 30 associated animal welfare sites (such as animal homes, hospitals, and clinics) that cater for both domestic and wild animals. The Society also supports and assists over 150 independent volunteer-run charities (individual branches) that use the RSPCA 'brand'.

For further information regarding the RSPCA, see: www.rspca.org.uk

1.2 Background to the project

The RSPCA's 200th anniversary in 2024 provides an opportunity to reflect on the organisation's founding, in particular the idea that improving animal wellbeing is part of a wider increasing social consciousness against cruelty, suffering, and exploitation, and that relatedly, how we treat animals says something about our society. In the run-up to its anniversary, the RSPCA will commission strategic foresight research on the future challenges and opportunities for animal wellbeing to 2050 and beyond, focusing on why animal wellbeing (also) matters for human wellbeing and environmental sustainability and how we can promote progress towards a more compassionate future.

For understandable reasons, a significant part of the RSPCA's policy and campaigning work has focused on strengthening animal welfare law and regulations, often in technical ways based on animal welfare science, to reduce (particularly extreme) cruelty to animals. This means that there remains the need for a much broader and deeper (social and cultural) shift to a society that actively promotes positive animal wellbeing, in part by understanding its connection to human wellbeing and environmental sustainability. That is, animal wellbeing matters not just because animals are sentient, but because how we as individuals and a society relate to animals has important implications for how we relate to each other and to the natural world.¹

In making connections to human and environmental wellbeing, this project will also promote the organisation's thinking to wider audiences. This will help to emphasise the RSPCA's roots as a social (justice) movement, but in the context of twenty-first century challenges.

This doesn't assume continual progress towards a compassionate future. The ill-treatment of animals could be exacerbated by, for example, factors such as population growth, rapid urbanization, economic pressures, and so on, driving the demand for 'cheap meat' and affecting people's treatment of animals in other ways (for example, economic pressures meaning fewer

¹ See the RSCPA's *What Have Animals Ever Done for Us? Book Of Essays 2022*, available at: www.rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/latest/essays

people can afford veterinary fees for domestic animals). Further, continuing (and accelerating) habit de-gradation and loss will cause huge animal suffering, not just species loss.

Further, our current treatment of animals (especially in but not limited to large-scale industrialised animal farming) is misaligned with what many (perhaps most) people say they think about animal cruelty and exploitation, and the growing recognition (including in policy) of animal sentience. This applies to farm animals, but also in different ways to domestic animals, kept animals, and wild animals (and in various ways, much cruelty and mistreatment of animals remains hidden). But this ‘behaviour gap’ also represents an opportunity for the RSPCA to advance its vision of putting an end to animal cruelty.

Moreover, we increasingly recognise that how we treat animals is also bad for human health (for example, increasing antimicrobial resistance) and for the environment (including through the inefficient use of land, habitat destruction/biodiversity loss, and greenhouse gas emissions from industrialised animal farming).

Hence for both positive and negative reasons, it is important for the RSPCA to look forward and consider the next few decades in terms of how a wide range of factors might shape animal wellbeing and how the organisation and others could anticipate and respond to this.

1.3 Broader programme of work

This research is part of a broader programme of work (not included in this Request for Proposals) marking the RSPCA’s anniversary. Following this strategic foresight work, the RSPCA will organize a series of expert seminars with stakeholders to reflect on the themes and issues identified by this project, and then publish a final paper setting out its own policy proposals and recommendations. As noted, this later work is not included in this commission.

Through this broader programme of work, the RSPCA seeks to:

- promote evidence-based understanding of the importance of animal wellbeing in a rapidly changing world, including by connecting it more strongly to human wellbeing and environmental sustainability;
- reach new audiences, especially thought leaders, opinion formers, and commentators;
- develop intelligence on how to promote animal wellbeing as a mainstream concern.

This should also:

- inform and strengthen RSPCA’s policy positions beyond core welfare issues;
- inform the RSPCA’s programme, communications, and fundraising work; and
- promote the RSPCA as a future-oriented organisation and even as a social movement, reflecting its historical origins.

In these ways, this programme of work should have a lasting legacy for the organization.

2. TENDER INFORMATION

2.1 Project objectives

Specifically, this strategic foresight work will develop intelligence on how we can improve animal wellbeing in a changing world, not just react to it, by:

- modelling future trends and scenarios in animal wellbeing, including the impact of broader factors such as cultural change and climate change (among many others);
- promoting positive change and/or avoiding negative developments in relation to these scenarios; and
- charting potential paths towards a positive, compassionate future for animals.

The main output from this project will be a major report, possibly composed of sub-reports published in stages. A more detailed description of these stages is included further below.

2.2 Scope

The notion of ‘wellbeing’ used here indicates a stronger, more expansive conception of animal welfare, akin to ‘positive animal welfare’, including animals’ happiness and quality of life, beyond ‘merely’ the avoidance of suffering. This reflects the RSPCA’s core beliefs, that all animals deserve a good life and that their lives are important, that they enrich and improve our lives, they have emotions, feelings and needs, and that all of us can and should help make a difference and make their lives better.

Reflecting this breadth, this project (and the broader programme) will encompass farm animals, domestic animals, kept animals, and wild animals. All are part of a systems of animal welfare/cruelty – all are affected by how we envisage animals, as well as by overlapping issues such as the recognition and/or treatment of animal pain, and more broadly, animal sentience.

In describing their proposed approach, tenderers for this work should suggest how they intend to manage these various types of animals in the stages of the work described below (for example, in separate workshop sessions, or as one whole).

Further, regarding the geographical/jurisdictional scope of the project, the RSPCA helps animals in England and Wales, but as the largest animal welfare charity in the UK and the oldest in the world, it has a much bigger influence. Also, many of the issues noted here are global in nature, and this project offers the potential for animal wellbeing to connect to other social justice movements and campaigns such as climate change. In many respects then, the scope of this project is international, although necessarily it will often be focused on trends and developments particularly as they affect animals in the UK and with implications for the RSPCA’s own work. Lastly, in certain respects the broader programme is likely to become more geographically specific as it progresses, particularly where the RSPCA will be making detailed recommendations to promote animal wellbeing to particular bodies (most obviously, UK Government and the Welsh Government).

2.3 Audiences/theory of change

As stated, through this broader programme of work, the RSPCA seeks to reach new audiences, especially thought leaders, opinion formers, and commentators, in order to promote the importance of animal wellbeing including by connecting it to human wellbeing and environmental sustainability. To achieve this, thought leaders from other sectors should be brought into the work of the programme as it progresses – including this strategic foresight research – both to inform the future of animal wellbeing, and to consider how attitudes,

legislation, and public policy associated with other policy areas, sectors, and social movements need to incorporate animal wellbeing concerns.

More broadly, policy and law typically lag social and cultural change, hence the next major advances in animal wellbeing might depend on promoting this latter change before further changes in policy become possible. For example, industrialised animal farming is partly demand led (as well as promoting this demand through advertising and marketing), hence arguably the most effective way to advance animal wellbeing would be to reduce the demand for (cheap) meat.

In any case, law and regulation is only part of the picture – clearly, laws can be flouted, there can be poor enforcement, and we want food producers to go beyond minimum standards to increasingly higher levels of welfare because consumers demand it. In addition, a widespread consciousness of and commitment to animal wellbeing would also improve people’s day-to-day actions towards animals (for example, animals in people’s gardens).

Lastly, engaging these wider audiences should help to build demand for the outcomes from the programme, in anticipation of how the RSPCA will respond to the issues and scenarios identified in the work.

This is only a tentative theory of change. One of the outcomes of this broader programme of work will be to develop a stronger, clearer theory of change and wider audiences for the RSPCA, including through testing this theory of change through the work of the programme itself, by bringing a wider set of thought leaders into its work and ‘seeing what happens’.

2.4 Strategic foresight

The main output from the project will be a report similar to those produced by the UK Government’s Foresight programme, which has produced a wide range of reports on subjects such as land use, future cities, and farming, among many others. In other respects (scope, comprehensiveness, credibility), the report will resemble the outputs from commissions such as the Dibleby Food Review, but focused on animal welfare and related issues such as food production and consumption, human health, land use, climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity etc.

In line with the best strategic foresight work, this is not about making predictions (‘the future will definitely be like this’). Rather, as the UK Government’s guide to futures thinking and foresight (*The Futures Toolkit, Tools for Futures Thinking and Foresight Across UK Government*, 2017) states, it involves: “Creat[ing] a narrative of the future, based on structured frameworks and evidence” (similarly, it has been said that “Foresight is the systematic debate of complex futures”). In other words, foresight is about developing multiple scenarios which recognise the complexity and unpredictability of the forces shaping the future, then getting different groups to discuss these scenarios with a view to how we might avoid or mitigate negative scenarios, and exploit and enhance positive scenarios.

Ideally, such work should enable decision-makers and others to move beyond current policy and practice debates, and to consider in more open and creative ways how presumed unrealisable goals could be brought about. This can also build consensus amongst stakeholders about issues and how to tackle them, and even mobilise these stakeholders to action.

Logically, identifying trends usually also requires looking backwards to the past, and scanning to collect insights about the present. Lastly, recognizing dynamics of change should encourage thinking in systems, for example linkages and feedback loops within and between systems.

2.5 Detailed project description

Tenderers for the work will be encouraged to propose approaches which they think could best fulfil the RSPCA's objectives. But we expect this work to include the following key stages:

i) Gathering intelligence about the future

This would include evidence and trend research (including available projections) on subjects including: pet ownership; industrial farming and meat consumption; progress and adoption of meat alternatives, vegetarian and vegan diets (either for health or ethical reasons); use of animals in experiments and progress on alternatives; the use and treatment of animals in sport and entertainment; habitat destruction and its impact on animal wellbeing and survival; more broadly, indicators of the wellbeing of wild animals and human interaction with and use of them; progress in understanding animal sentience, emotions, and wellbeing; relationships between human health and animal health; contribution of animals to human wellbeing; public attitudes to cruelty towards animals, sentience, eating meat etc; trade, globalization, and live animal exports; and the availability and costs of veterinary care.

As noted, identifying trends also requires looking backwards to the past and scanning to collect insights about the present, in order to draw out implications for the future. Where available and relevant, some these trends could be analyzed by demographic data (geography, socio-economic status, age, gender etc.)

This stage of the work will also draw on the RSPCA's recently published Kindness Index.² This evidence would also help to identify the animal wellbeing 'attitude-behaviour gap' (akin to that in climate change/environmental sustainability), where many more people agree on the importance of an issue than have made substantial changes in personal behaviours in response to it. The RSPCA could also serve as a source of some data for this analysis, for example from its services and website traffic.

ii) Exploring the dynamics of change

This stage of the work is likely to resemble PESTLE analysis, that is, considering the range of factors that could affect change in these trends. This could include:

- Political – including social movements and rapid campaign mobilisation, declining trust in established political institutions, 'post-politics'.
- Economic – including how economic growth (development, population change) could affect the demand for meat, for example.
- Societal – for example a paradigm shift away from 'speciesism', and so the future possibility of new norms around animal wellbeing. Generational change could be a significant part of this, including for example a connection to the young generation of

² See: www.rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/latest/kindnessindex

climate change activists. The increasing popularity of veganism could also be a precursor (signal) of a more profound change emerging, as could the rise of consciously pro-social businesses (whether not-for-profit or not) and social innovation.

- Technology – in various respects. Technological advances give us the power to ‘interfere’ with animals’ bodies and environments, through agriscience, synthetic biology etc. There are also convergent technologies such as big data, sensors, automation, biology, satellites etc, and how they might shape farming and land use. In a very different sense, there is how technology could impact charities and campaigns, for example big data, as well as already noted how social media etc enables the rapid mobilisation of civil society-led campaigns.
- Legislative – what might be the next steps, or the long-term goals, for animal welfare law? Some commentators, for example, have argued for full legal rights for animals. What are the further implications of recognizing animal sentience in law? There are also how international (trade) agreements inform animal welfare policy and regulation.
- Environmental – in addition to climate change, this includes environmental degradation, habitat loss, biodiversity loss and collapse etc., and how these could affect animal wellbeing, including the impact of more extreme weather events on animals in various ways. It will be particularly important here not to assume linear trends; systems thinking can help us to consider accelerating feedback loops, sudden tipping points etc.

We anticipate that this analysis is likely to reflect a number of long-term macro-trends, for example information technology/the digitisation of society, increasing inclusion (who we generally consider ‘full members’ of society, and whose interests we recognise including future generations) and associated behaviour change, and as noted climate change/habitat degradation. These are also highly likely to be key trends that increasingly shape future generations’ attitudes and actions. Underlying all of this of course is how and why we view and value animals (in a non-economic sense), and how this might differ in different contexts.

Further, this stage should also involve conceptualizing animal cruelty and exploitation as a system or related set of systems. For example, human use of animals is tied closely to industrialization and development (and more recently, consumerism), which alongside its benefits, has increasingly brought us to crisis (economic, social, health, environmental), often caused by the unsustainable use of resources (in many respects exemplified by the industrialised food production system). Conversely, urban farming and more localized food production could help to improve people’s health, strengthen and diversify local economies, and re-connect people with animals and nature (these are also just some of the respects in which animal wellbeing relates to place and space).

This stage could also include capturing the economic, social, health, and environmental costs of this system(s). So, for example, what are the economics of industrialised animal farming, incorporating negative externalities? And what might be the potential benefits of a more compassionate future that substantially reduced these costs and negative externalities?

iii) Describing what the future might be like

Building on the first two stages, this stage of the work will focus on the development of four or so scenarios for animal wellbeing – most likely, two largely positive, and two largely

negative. Again, we expect this stage of the work to be highly participative – with experts and stakeholders, but also possibly members of the public as appropriate.

These scenarios will include a good level of detail. Stories could be used to illustrate them, for example what is it like to live (a day in the life) in these futures? (There are likely to be other creative ways to communicate these futures, for example, ‘postcards from the future’). Equally, quantitative indicators could be used to describe how the futures differ from each other.

The RSPCA will particularly look to this stage of the work for strong communications messages to promote this work and its forward-looking agenda generally.

iv) Developing and testing possible responses

The last stage of the project will consider how we might respond to these scenarios and associated transitions. For example, how could we manage a major transition away from industrial farming to lab-grown meat and vegetarian/vegan diets, and what would be its major implications for job displacement, social equity, repurposing land use, implications for rural communities, supply chains, food security etc?

Again, some modelling work could be conducted here on the costs and benefits of these scenarios/transitions, akin to the kinds of analysis conducted with regards to transitioning to a low/no carbon economy and society (or indeed, the costs of failing to do so).

Another area for potential consideration could be animal wellbeing as a key social movement for the 21st century, echoing as noted the origins of the RSPCA. Given the above analysis and scenarios, what might be the potential for such a social movement able to connect animal wellbeing to human and environmental wellbeing in many people’s minds?

2.6 Methods

According to the UK Government guide to future thinking and foresight, some of the key methods relating to these four main stages (some of which we would expect to see among those proposed by tenderers for this work) include:

i) Gathering intelligence about the future:

- Horizon Scanning
- 7 Questions
- Issues Paper
- Delphi

ii) Exploring the dynamics of change:

- Driver Mapping
- Axes of Uncertainty

iii) Describing what the future might be like:

- Scenarios
- Visioning

- SWOT Analysis

iv) Developing and testing possible responses:

- Policy Stress-testing
- Backcasting
- Roadmapping

The RSPCA encourages tenderers to propose other methods that they think will meet the objectives for this work, including creative approaches.

2.7 Research team

Given the breadth of the project, the RSPCA welcomes proposals from collaborative partnership teams, comprising for example a strategic foresight/futures consultancy, an economics consultancy, and university-based researchers focusing on animal welfare/ethics and possibly also sustainability, ecosystems, land use etc.

Given the importance of workshop sessions with stakeholders, the RSPCA would expect the lead organisation to be based in the UK.

The RSPCA encourages diversity in proposed teams.

The RSPCA expects a close working relationship with the selected research team, not only through regular project management and review meetings, but also by participating itself in workshop sessions, and working with the team to review and shape the resulting reports.

The RSPCA will identify a project manager to liaise with the selected team and establish an internal steering/quality assurance review group for the project.

2.8 Timescales and deliverables

- Interim report #1 (reporting on stages i and ii) – January 2023
- Interim report #2 (reporting on stages iii and iv) – June 2023
- Draft final report – August 2023
- Final revised report – September 2023

Further to discussion with the selected research team, in addition to the final report, the RSPCA could choose to publish the interim report(s) as public outputs from the work.

These are only indicative timescales. As above, the RSPCA welcomes tenderers proposing amended timescales and deliverables based on their proposed approach to the work.

The precise timescales for the project will be determined in collaboration with the selected research team as part of the project inception and contract process.

2.9 Costings

The budget for the project £80-100k (exclusive of VAT), to be paid in four equal installments (on signing of the contract, delivery of Interim report #1, Interim report #2, and the Revised final report), according to agreed methodology and quality.

Proposals should demonstrate clear value for money. The RSPCA would be happy to consider bids that involve match-funding or co-funding the project, and for project/research teams to consider how leveraging in additional funding could extend the scope of the project.

2.10 Intellectual property

The RSPCA will retain ownership of the work but the researchers will be fully credited for their work. The RSPCA will grant the researchers the right to publish and re-use the material submitted to RSPCA. Respective consultancies and institutions should not apply if they will not be able to agree to this provision. The researchers should acknowledge the support from the RSPCA in any subsequent publications and activity based on the project.

2.11 Application process

Organisations/project teams should submit a proposal document that includes:

- Proposed methodology
- Proposed outputs, demonstrating conformity (or otherwise) with the project purpose and brief described in Section 2.3 of this document
- Project team and general experience
- Statement of experience relevant to the project, and selected projects that demonstrate relevant experience
- Proposed approach to project management, identifying risks and mitigation strategies, and specifying how the project will be delivered on time and do a high standard
- Total cost of the project
- An outline budget breakdown between the stages, daily rates, and personnel inputs.

Proposals should be sent to: michael.harris@rspca.org.uk

2.12 Closing date for proposals

The closing date for proposals is: **Wednesday 5th October 2022 at 5pm (UK time).**

If required, interviews for a shortlist of tenderers are likely to be held **w/c 10th October 2022.**

2.13 Evaluation criteria

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Quality, rigour, and depth of the proposed methodology and analysis
2. Experience/track record/knowledge of research and/or project delivery relevant to the project
3. Experience of effective and impactful partnership working
4. Experience of managing potentially politically sensitive projects
5. Value for money and added value

An assessment panel comprising members of the project steering group will evaluate proposals and decide which application to support.

2.14 Further information and enquiries

The website page for this project is: www.rspca.org.uk/anniversarycommission

We welcome enquiries about this project, but please note that all responses to enquiries will be issued as (anonymised) Q&As to all tenderers and/or posted on the project page.

For enquiries, please contact: michael.harris@rspca.org.uk