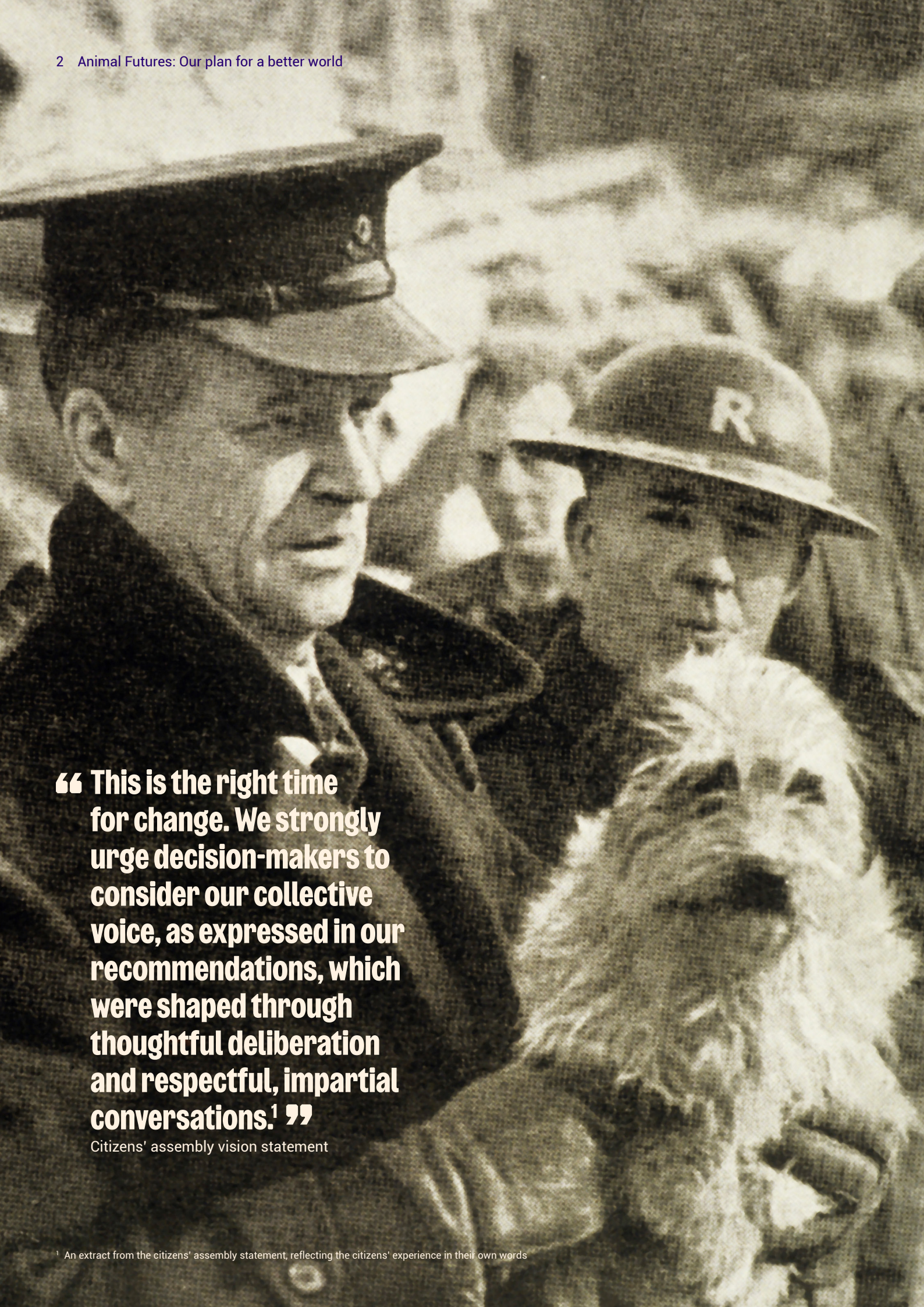




Animal Futures:
Our plan for a better world

RSPCA.

A black and white photograph showing a man in a military uniform on the left and a young boy in a scout uniform on the right. The boy is holding a small, fluffy dog. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in similar uniforms.

“ This is the right time for change. We strongly urge decision-makers to consider our collective voice, as expressed in our recommendations, which were shaped through thoughtful deliberation and respectful, impartial conversations.¹ ”

Citizens' assembly vision statement

¹ An extract from the citizens' assembly statement, reflecting the citizens' experience in their own words

Foreword

By Thomas Schultz-Jagow, Director of Advocacy and Prevention, RSPCA

In 1824, the RSPCA became the world's first charity dedicated to preventing animal cruelty. Over 200 years later, we've helped transform the world for animals and continue to improve their lives. During this period, we've influenced over 400 laws, from the landmark Protection of Animals Act 1911, which was the first of its kind to establish legal safeguards to prevent cruelty to animals, to the pioneering Animal Welfare Act 2006. Beyond our political influence, we've helped change how people perceive and treat animals, inspiring generations to show them care and respect.

However, today, the challenges facing animals are more urgent and complex than ever, crossing borders, industries and communities – they cannot be solved in isolation. Yet, at a time when humans also face huge challenges, such as food insecurity, the cost-of-living crisis, political instability and war, it can be difficult to make animals' voices heard. The reality is: what's good for animals is good for us all. The growth of low-welfare farming, the rapid advance of technology, and the deepening climate and nature crises are all issues that affect not only animals but people and the planet, too.

We're at a crossroads, and the choices we make today will shape the future we build for animals – and ourselves.

It's with this understanding that we aim to spark a transformational shift in how humanity relates to animals, achieving our vision of a world where animals don't merely survive, but truly thrive. This vision led to the creation of the Animal Futures project. To begin, we partnered with the strategic consultancy Firetail, using futures methodology to explore the scenarios and forces that could define animals' lives by 2050. What emerged was clear: the choices we make today will determine whether animals face a bleak tomorrow, or whether we create a world where they flourish alongside us. Without action now, we risk a future where technology deepens their commodification, where conflicts over land escalate, and where environmental destruction pushes countless species to extinction.



We alone cannot change the future for animals.

Real change demands we speak with one voice, which means we need the public with us. That's why we launched the Animal Futures citizens' assembly as part of our Animal Futures project. The citizens' assembly was the first of its kind for animal welfare and for the RSPCA. Working with New Citizen Project (NCP), we created the largest public conversation on animal welfare to date. Using deliberative democracy, we invited the public, through an online forum, to suggest their ideas on the changes they'd like to see to create a better world for animals through our 'Big Conversation'. NCP then held the Animal Futures citizens' assembly, bringing together 44 diverse individuals, and presented these ideas alongside the views of animal welfare experts. The assembly's vision and recommendations made it abundantly clear that animal welfare truly matters to people.

The assembly's bold recommendations called for stronger laws and protections for pets, a more compassionate and transparent farming system, and new policies that embed animal welfare and habitats into the very heart of planning and development. They also made it clear that while individuals want the tools to make the right choices, government and industry must lead the way in protecting animals.

This process, its recommendations, and this report together mark a pivotal moment. They unite the UK public's voice with the RSPCA's experience and expertise to set a path forward. The people have spoken: to build a fairer, kinder and more sustainable society, we must put animal welfare at its heart.



Executive summary

For over 200 years, the RSPCA has championed policy, legislative and cultural changes to create a better world for animals. We've influenced over 400 laws and transformed the way society perceives and treats animals. However, urgent and complex challenges persist, from rising neglect and abandonment due to the cost-of-living crisis, to the growth of low-welfare farming, climate change impacts, and rapid nature loss. Immediate action is needed to secure a safer, more compassionate future for animals.

At the RSPCA, we envision a future where animals don't just survive, but thrive.

To help achieve this, we launched the Animal Futures project in 2024, our bicentenary year, to bring animal welfare back to the forefront and explore how the

public, policymakers, and NGOs like the RSPCA can drive the necessary changes. As part of this, we commissioned the Wilberforce Report², which outlined five potential scenarios for animals, people and the planet by 2050. These range from optimistic transformations in attitudes to ecological breakdown and mass extinctions caused by climate change.

RETHINKING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ANIMALS

These warnings highlight the urgent need to rethink our relationship with animals to avoid a dystopian future. In response to the Wilberforce Report³, the RSPCA proposed a new social contract between people and animals. This shifts the perception of animals from commodities to sentient beings with their own needs, feelings and values, deserving of respect. Building this stronger human-animal bond requires deeper public understanding and practical changes in how we care for pets, farmed animals and wildlife.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A KINDER FUTURE FOR ANIMALS

To foster this deeper understanding, the RSPCA, in collaboration with participation consultancy New Citizen Project (NCP)⁴, launched 'Animal Futures: The Big Conversation'⁵ earlier this year, followed by the 'Citizens' Assembly on the Future of Animal Welfare' (referred to as the citizens' assembly throughout the report). The Animal Futures project aimed to be the UK's largest public conversation on animal welfare, engaging over 7,000 people. The Big Conversation invited public ideas and policy solutions for creating a better world for animals. The ideas were then included in national polling, with the most popular taken forward to shape the discussions at the citizens' assembly.

The citizens' assembly brought together 44 participants, representative of the general public across England and Wales. Eighteen experts presented on topics such as the moral and legal status of animals, pet ownership, farming, and the human impact on wild animals. Using this expert evidence, suggestions from The Big Conversation, and their own insights, the assembly developed a vision for the future of animal welfare⁶ and a clear, inspiring roadmap for change, including practical recommendations (see Table 1, page 6). The top five priorities for action, identified by overall support, are shown in bold in the table. It's particularly encouraging that some of these public priorities align with the RSPCA's own advocacy goals, demonstrating a strong shared vision for a kinder future. The recommendation on technology (Farming in future) was not put forward by citizens' assembly members or NCP as a core recommendation.

² RSPCA x Firetail. *The Wilberforce Report: Exploring the future of animal wellbeing by 2050*. Available at: firetail.co.uk/future-of-animal-wellbeing

³ RSPCA. *RSPCA's Response to the Wilberforce Report*. Available at: rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/latest/animalfutures/fullresponse

⁴ newcitizenproject.com

⁵ RSPCA. *Animal Futures: The Big Conversation*. Available at: animalfutures.rspca.org.uk

⁶ New Citizen Project. (2025) *Animal Futures: The Big Conversation*. Available at: newcitizenproject.com/projects/animal-futures-the-big-conversation

TABLE 1: CITIZENS’ ASSEMBLY RECOMMENDATIONS

Pet ownership and breeding		Farming now	
Conducting campaigns to build awareness around pet ownership		Increasing welfare standards for farmed animals	
Teaching animal welfare in schools		Ensuring transparent, fair prices for higher-welfare meat	
Recording how pets are bred, sold and cared for using ‘Pet Life Certificates’		Providing greater support for higher-welfare farming	
Creating a dedicated regulatory body for pets		Embedding animal welfare into the future of land use and farming	
Farming in future		Human impact on wild animals	
Welfare labelling and building awareness at point of purchase		Strengthening existing wildlife laws and resourcing for their enforcement	
Supporting the growth and uptake of alternative proteins		Creating a ‘Community Habitat Service’	
Regulating how precision breeding and gene editing is used in farming		Banning activities where animals are shot for sport	
Using technology for monitoring and increasing animal welfare ⁷		Advocating for, regulating and enforcing wild animal-friendly development	

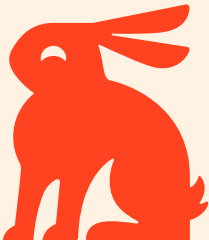


For companion animals, this vision focuses on animal welfare education in schools, supporting responsible pet ownership, and stronger breeding regulation. For farmed animals, the assembly’s vision means ending cage use, prioritising animal welfare in food production and land use, supporting farmers, and enabling informed consumer choices through welfare labelling and accessible alternatives. For wild animals, members call for stronger protections, connected habitats and modernised laws to end destructive practices such as shooting for sport.

BUILDING ON THE CITIZENS’ ASSEMBLY RECOMMENDATIONS: THE RSPCA’S VISION FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

The RSPCA’s recommendations for animal welfare (see Table 2, page 8) build on the valuable insights from the citizens’ assembly, acknowledging the importance of both expert guidance and public perspectives. We welcome the assembly’s recommendations and will consider how to integrate them into our advocacy work, ensuring citizen voices guide future animal welfare policy. Many identified priorities align with existing RSPCA work, demonstrating a strong shared vision.

By combining the concerns and aspirations of citizens with decades of experience, scientific research and frontline expertise, the assembly’s vision and the RSPCA’s recommendations together create a powerful, complementary pathway for meaningful and sustainable improvements for animals.



⁷ This was not put forward by the citizens’ assembly members or NCP as a core recommendation

“ Given the right information, the time to deliberate, and a respectful environment, everyday citizens are not only capable of understanding complex issues but also of finding thoughtful, considered solutions. ”

Citizens' assembly member



TABLE 2: RSPCA'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Pet ownership and breeding	Farming now
Partnerships between relevant organisations and government are key to promoting responsible pet ownership campaigns	Higher-welfare farming regulations should be established and enforced, with support for farmers to transition and supply chains ensuring compliance
Schools and other learning establishments should be provided with guidance and resources for consistent animal welfare education	Policies and incentives for fair, transparent pricing of higher-welfare meat should be implemented, with retailers adopting these practices
Centralised pet licensing needs to be established with robust enforcement and improved data	Legal frameworks and incentives should be expanded to support higher-welfare farming, with stakeholders implementing schemes like the Sustainable Farming Incentive. Charities and campaigns drive standards and awareness
Local enforcement should be funded and strengthened, pet licensing reviewed, and existing initiatives fully enforced to improve animal welfare regulation	Animal welfare should be integrated into national and local food, land use, nature, and climate policies, with oversight and recognition in planning decisions
Farming in future	Human impact on wild animals
Mandatory, evidence-based method-of-production labelling should be introduced, with retailers providing clear, consistent welfare information for informed consumer choices	Wildlife protection should be strengthened through new legislation, updated and consolidated existing laws, stronger penalties, and the use of technology to improve enforcement
Clear standards, research and development funding, and regulation for lab-grown proteins should be established, with retailers and producers ensuring they're accessible, affordable and appealing	Community habitat projects need support from government and local authorities through training, resources and public engagement, alongside RSPCA guidance
Clear regulations for gene editing should cover all animals, ensuring welfare and ethics, with coordinated rules for gene-edited animals in Wales	Consultations should be held to develop a legal framework addressing the animal welfare and environmental harms of shooting for sport and recreation, and ending trail hunting
AI codes of practice and governance should be established to ensure AI is used safely and to only improve animal welfare	A national framework for wildlife-friendly building design should be established to help integrate biodiversity and green infrastructure into planning

DELIVERING A KINDER FUTURE FOR ANIMALS

The RSPCA is committed to supporting this transformation through education, campaigns, RSPCA Assured and advocacy. However, real progress depends on government leadership at all levels – local, devolved and national. Other key stakeholders, including farmers, retailers, developers and consumers, must also be empowered to prioritise animal welfare. By acting now, we can create a future where every companion animal is cared for, every farmed animal experiences a good life, and every wild animal thrives in safe and protected habitats. The citizens' assembly has set the vision; it's now our collective responsibility to deliver it.

RSPCA action: The Animal Futures project



BUILDING ON TWO CENTURIES OF CHANGE: THE WILBERFORCE REPORT

In 1824, when the RSPCA was founded, animal life was vastly different. Animals weren't recognised as sentient, and with only one law protecting a single species (the cow), they were brutally used in sports and entertainment. While attitudes have improved over 200 years, much more must be done to ensure all animals are treated with kindness and respect. Organisations dedicated to animals and animal welfare now exist⁸, and, thanks to campaigning by the RSPCA and our partners, animals have much better legal protection through legislation such as the groundbreaking Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the more recent Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022. We're also seeing shifts towards greater public kindness to animals, with 71 percent of adults and 89 percent of children identifying as animal lovers⁹.

Despite this progress, a brighter future for animals isn't guaranteed; they face some of the greatest challenges in our 200-year history.

There's a serious risk of a dystopian future for both humans and animals. To mark our 200th anniversary in 2024, we launched the Animal Futures project, exploring animal welfare's future. This included commissioning pioneering research – the Wilberforce Report and an interactive game – which outlined five scenarios for animals' futures, both good and bad. Two scenarios are particularly bleak: a Tech-centric future, where society turns to technology to solve challenges, such as food security, and animals are commodified and reduced to mere resources, and an Eco Carnage scenario, where unchecked global crises lead to ecosystem collapse and mass extinctions, and animals are regarded only as tools for human survival and sources of food. The Wilberforce Report¹⁰ makes it clear we could be sleepwalking into a bleak future¹¹; as a nation, we must urgently address our relationship with and treatment of animals to prevent this. Animals' futures are very much in our hands.

ANIMAL FUTURES: THE BIG CONVERSATION AND CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

At the RSPCA, we believe an alternative future is possible – one where, by 2050, compassion for animals is instinctive, their welfare is embedded in society, and our relationship with them enriches both people and the planet. To create a world where animals thrive, we must transform human-animal relationships. Our response to the Wilberforce Report recommends a new 'social contract' between people and animals, moving from exploitation to respect, recognising them as sentient beings with feelings, values and needs. This commitment requires deeper public understanding of animals – their needs, how our lives intersect with theirs, and their current realities.

⁸ These include the World Wildlife Fund, National Animal Welfare Trust, Born Free Foundation, Wildlife Trusts, PDSA and Blue Cross

⁹ RSPCA. *Kindness Index 2025*. Available at: rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/latest/kindnessindex/2025

¹⁰ Firetail. (2024) 'The Wilberforce Report: The Future of Animal Wellbeing in 2050'. Available at:

static1.squarespace.com/static/6515733a0c44ad143f07426b/t/66def3edc6171855527a4705/1725887483361/RSPCA+-+Wilberforce+Report+2024.pdf

¹¹ RSPCA. *Animal Futures*. Available at: rspca.org.uk/webContent/animalfutures

To foster this stronger human-animal bond, we launched one of the largest public conversations on animal welfare ever held in the UK, inviting people from all walks of life to imagine and shape a kinder future. The Animal Futures project engaged over 7,000 members of the public to hear their views on changes needed for a better future for every animal. It began earlier this year with The Big Conversation¹², held on the GoVocal online platform, where people across the country shared ideas and policy solutions. The ideas were then included in a national poll, with the most popular shaping the content for the Citizens' Assembly on the Future of Animal Welfare (referred to as the citizens' assembly throughout the report).

A citizens' assembly is a group of people brought together to learn about and discuss an issue or issues, and reach conclusions about what they think should happen.

Following this, the RSPCA commissioned participation consultancy New Citizen Project (NCP) to run an independent citizens' assembly, bringing together 44 participants demographically representative of England and Wales. Assembly members heard from 18 experts on key issues including the moral and legal status of animals, pet ownership, farming, and the human impact on wildlife. Using expert evidence, The Big Conversation suggestions and their own insights, the assembly created a vision for animal welfare¹³ and a powerful set of recommendations for decisive change. These recommendations will inform future animal welfare policy and deepen citizen engagement.



¹² RSPCA. *Animal Futures: The Big Conversation*. Available at: animalfutures.rspca.org.uk

¹³ New Citizen Project. (2025) *Animal Futures: The Big Conversation*. Available at: newcitizenproject.com/projects/animal-futures-the-big-conversation

The change we choose for animals: The RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly's recommendations

The RSPCA thanks the citizens' assembly for their dedication. We share many concerns about animal life in England and Wales today, and our policy positions reflect many of the assembly's ambitious recommendations. While we broadly agree with their diagnosis of welfare issues, in some circumstances we recommend different solutions or mechanisms for change. The RSPCA's recommendations for policy and legislative change are also included throughout this report.

The RSPCA will use the citizens' assembly's recommendations as a catalyst to continue pushing for policy and legislative change at local, devolved and national government levels to create a better world for every animal. We'll also use them to reflect on our advocacy work, ensuring it delivers the change the public expects and animals desperately need. The citizens' assembly recommendations, and the RSPCA's response to them, are collated on the following pages.



“ This is such an important piece of the puzzle. Too often, people get pets without fully understanding the long-term commitment involved. ”

Citizens' assembly member



Pet ownership and breeding

CONDUCTING CAMPAIGNS TO BUILD AWARENESS AROUND PET OWNERSHIP

Citizens' assembly recommendations

'We want people to be better informed about the responsibilities of pet ownership before they acquire one, including which pets (if any) would be most appropriate for their situation and how to care for them. This would result in healthier pets, with fewer being abandoned, neglected or mistreated. This would involve:

- *A professionally designed and delivered public awareness campaign being run across multiple channels and covering a range of pets.*
- *The messaging would focus on reasons for or against owning a pet and, if so, which pet. This would make sure that the decision to acquire a pet is carefully considered.*
- *Measures of success are defined and tracked: the key aim would be a reduction in the number of animals that end up in shelters; reduction in prosecutions or fines related to animal cruelty; and a reduction in pets being bought from 'bad breeders'. Vets could be involved in tracking this.*
- *The RSPCA would ideally take the lead, seeking to engage organisations with related campaigns and messaging to work together while delivering clear focused messages that support pet welfare.*
- *Organisations including the RSPCA could pool funding to make this a key shared priority.'*

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

The RSPCA fully supports the core of this recommendation, recognising that responsible pet ownership and a stronger understanding of pets' needs are essential for safeguarding and improving pet welfare in England and Wales. In particular, greater awareness is needed regarding the cost of pet ownership; the RSPCA's annual Kindness Index shows that 74 percent of the public find pet care more



expensive than a year ago¹⁴. Rising costs and a lack of awareness of the specialist needs of many animals have led to a 51 percent increase in the number of abandoned pets the RSPCA has been called to help over the last three years. To ensure campaign success, 'responsible pet ownership' must be clearly defined, adopted and promoted by key stakeholders including government, enforcement agencies, and animal welfare scientists, in collaboration with pet owners, to maintain clear and consistent messaging.

One key area of responsible pet ownership we already champion is tackling extreme conformation (exaggerated physical appearance). One of the RSPCA's nine ambitions in our 2030 strategy¹⁵ is to 'end the harmful selling and breeding of pets in England and Wales'. This includes ending the breeding of animals with exaggerated physical features, such as short noses, long backs with short legs, and skin folds, which can cause serious health problems for pets as well as negative financial and emotional impacts on owners. The RSPCA is developing a multi-stakeholder human behaviour change programme to tackle the supply and demand of companion animals bred with harmful physical traits. This involves raising public awareness of health issues, pushing for legislative change, and engaging breeders to explore healthier breeding options.

¹⁴ RSPCA. Kindness Index 2025. Available at: rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/latest/kindnessindex/2025

¹⁵ RSPCA. 2030 Strategy. Available at: rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/strategy



Additionally, the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) is advancing this issue in England with an Innate Health Assessment tool and online portal to help the public and enforcement bodies understand the impacts of such breeding on pets and ensure only healthy parents are bred from. There is significant interest from the UK Government and the insurance industry, and we're calling on the next Welsh Government to support this approach, with devolved governments in Wales and Scotland also currently considering its use.

RSPCA recommendations

- **We call on the Department for Education and the Welsh Government's education Ministry to work with the Pet Education Partnership (PEP)¹⁶ and businesses across the pet sector to promote responsible pet ownership campaigns and embed it into children's education.** Promoting responsible pet ownership cannot be solely the responsibility of animal welfare and rehoming charities; it needs government endorsement. Without targeted behaviour change campaigns, pet abandonment, neglect or mistreatment will remain unacceptably high.
- **At the RSPCA, we'll actively support** responsible pet ownership campaigns and amplify their reach. We believe other animal welfare charities and NGOs should also support this approach. We'll continue our work through PEP to raise awareness among five to 11-year-olds and their families about the responsibilities of pet ownership.

TEACHING ANIMAL WELFARE IN SCHOOLS

Citizens' assembly recommendations

'We want young people to learn about animal welfare from an early age. Children can have an influence on the adults in their lives, and over time we hope that everyone will become better equipped to make decisions as adults that prioritise animal welfare. This would involve:

- *Ensure that animal welfare is taught to every child as part of the general curriculum. All Key Stages of the curriculum will cover animal welfare in an age-appropriate way (including in nurseries), building up a full understanding of different aspects of animal welfare.*
- *Appropriate school trips, identified locally, will be offered to make the learning tangible for different age ranges (e.g. forest schools). Shared school pets could contribute to the way animal welfare is taught.*
- *Educational resources for schools should be provided – RSPCA could be involved in developing materials (drawing on existing materials), and a measure of success could be the level of uptake of these materials, as well as test results in schools. It would be worthwhile to map existing resources and materials that are already available.*
- *A possible idea is a TV programme following a cohort of people from childhood to adulthood to see how attitudes change – this could be linked to pet welfare education and awareness raising campaigns.'*

¹⁶ The Pet Education Partnership (peteducationpartnership.org/about-us) is a collaborative initiative between the UK's leading animal welfare organisations: PDSA, RSPCA, Blue Cross, Cats Protection, Dogs Trust, Woodgreen, USPCA and SSPCA

¹⁷ RSPCA. (2025) 'RSPCA Policy book'. Available at: rspca.org.uk/documents/d/rspca-policy-booklet-2025



“ I strongly support this recommendation. Instilling empathy and respect for animals from an early age can have a powerful long-term impact. ”

Citizens' assembly member

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

The RSPCA welcomes this recommendation and the clear public support for embedding animal welfare into education. Including animal welfare education in schools and other learning environments is a top priority for the RSPCA. Our 2025 Kindness Index found that 90 percent of adults aged over 16 believe teaching animal welfare in schools has important benefits, such as helping pupils understand their actions' impact on animals and increasing compassion for animals. We're pleased that assembly members also recognise these benefits for younger generations.

While we understand the intent of this recommendation and the benefits children gain from relationships with animals, we don't support using animals in schools or as shared school pets¹⁷. Classrooms can be noisy and stressful for animals, and they may be left alone for long periods. However, there are many ways to connect children with animals by supporting local nature and learning how to treat them with compassion.

The RSPCA is actively working to improve educational resources for young people, families and schools. We're proud to chair PEP, uniting eight major UK animal charities to strengthen animal welfare education nationwide. Through PEP, we contribute expert resources, host online events, and commission evidence-based approaches to bring animal welfare into classrooms.

We also make submissions to the Department for Education to advocate for animal welfare in the National Curriculum in England, work with Multi Academy Trusts to embed welfare into Citizenship and Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) programmes, and support the development of the new British Natural History qualification at GCSE and A-Level by championing animal welfare modules.

Our goal is clear: children learn respect for animals from their earliest years and carry these values into adulthood.

Meanwhile, the Welsh Government began gradually introducing the New Curriculum for Wales in 2022, allowing teachers to cover animal welfare in relevant Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE), such as humanities or science and technology. However, it's unclear if these opportunities are being utilised. We encourage the Welsh Government to actively promote this, recognising that a joint approach with us will likely be needed for bilingual materials.

From a companion animal perspective, we're creating learning opportunities on the welfare harms of extreme breeding and conformation, showing children what healthy animals look like and highlighting good versus poor practice. This is part of our broader mission to challenge harmful breeding trends and build a generation of more informed, compassionate pet owners. Our commitment extends beyond the classroom. We run four community engagement hubs across England, working with schools and local communities to deliver animal welfare education alongside proactive outreach and practical support. To expand our reach, our online Education Hub offers lesson plans, resources, and activities designed to connect children with animals through real experiences and interactive learning. We're now looking to scale this even further by marketing our resources across the education sector, ensuring every child has the opportunity to understand, respect and protect animals.

RSPCA recommendations

- **The RSPCA recognises that we all play a role in educating the next generation to be kind to animals. However, we call on the Department of Education and the Welsh Government to champion that approach through providing guidance and resources for schools and other learning establishments to ensure consistent animal welfare education is taught.**
- **The RSPCA will continue to develop high-quality, evidence-based educational resources on animal welfare, providing training for educators, and offering workshops and tools that create opportunities for learning beyond traditional classroom environments.** These will be available in both English and Welsh. We believe success depends on collaboration with other animal welfare organisations and continue to be grateful for the partnership approach to this across the sector.

“ This recommendation feels like a practical and much-needed step. Greater transparency will help tackle irresponsible breeding and give future pet owners more confidence.”

Citizens' assembly member



RECORDING HOW PETS ARE BRED, SOLD AND CARED FOR USING 'PET LIFE CERTIFICATES'

Citizens' assembly recommendations

'We want every pet owner and breeder to provide necessary information about the pets they own or sell in a central and accessible way. This would give prospective owners peace of mind that the animal has been bred responsibly and help authorities to track breeding trends, possible offences, and to celebrate good breeding practices. This would involve:

- *Setup and management of a database of pets in the UK, linked to existing microchips where applicable.*
- *A system for breeders and owners registering and editing pet information.*
- *The creation of a measure or algorithm that tracks breeding patterns and alerts authorities.*

- *A gradual introduction so that all pets are eventually registered.*
- *The set up of a licensing fee in order to fund the certificate, and support for those where the cost of the certificate would be a barrier.'*

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

The RSPCA welcomes the citizens' assembly's consideration of more effective regulation for pet ownership and breeding in England and Wales. We strongly support their recommendation for a database with detailed pet information, including breeding, health, and ownership.



The RSPCA has already started to explore this approach in our report *Taking the Lead: Alternative Approaches to Effective Dog Control in the UK*¹⁸, which calls for a central, accessible database for robust traceability, including dog population, ownership and location data. We recently commissioned further research on implementation costs, including a dog licensing scheme, which will provide insight for expanding licensing to other pets. We're therefore pleased the citizens' assembly also recommends exploring pet licensing.

However, the RSPCA's existing policy position goes further than the recommendations of the citizens' assembly by examining which species can be kept as companion animals. We believe only animals whose welfare needs can be met and can experience a good life should be kept as pets. We advocate for preventive and precautionary regulations that limit keeping wild animals as pets to species likely to experience lifelong good welfare. Our *Keeping Primates as Pets*¹⁹ campaign calls for an end to keeping primates as pets, as these highly intelligent, social, wild animals cannot thrive in homes. Thanks to our campaigning, alongside our partners, from April 2026, it will be illegal in England to keep primates without a licence meeting zoo-level welfare standards, and we're pushing for clear implementation plans to prevent abandonment and ensure primate welfare. In Wales, no such law exists yet, but we're campaigning for an outright ban on the keeping of primates as pets and have included these calls in our manifesto for the 2026 Senedd election.

“I absolutely love this idea and think it could be key in helping to make life safer and happier for all companion animals.”

Citizens' assembly member

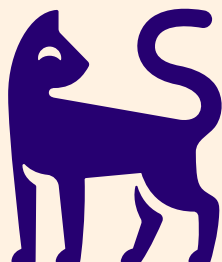
The RSPCA also seeks improved legal protection for pets, for example through 'positive lists' of animals who can be kept as pets, based on evidence-based assessments of risks to animal welfare, biodiversity, the environment and human health and safety. Animals not on this list couldn't be kept as pets.



We're commissioning research to understand if positive lists or alternative legal restrictions can deliver positive outcomes for captive wild animals, and we advocate for greater government focus on regulating exotic pet-keeping.

RSPCA recommendations

- **We'd like to see Defra and the Welsh Government** establish centralised, accessible licensing systems under each country's version of the Licensing of Activities Involving Animals Regulations. This would enable robust traceability and accurate, detailed recording and monitoring of pet ownership and health, setting out the legal framework, requirements, and funding mechanisms for pet licenses. This is vital for addressing current critical data gaps and improving traceability, which is necessary for enforcement.
- **We'd welcome government consultations from the UK and Welsh Governments** to explore how to improve the regulation of exotic pet keeping, through both legislative and non-legislative approaches.
- **Local authorities across England and Wales** need to be empowered to enforce any licensing regulations, supporting pet owners and breeders, while ensuring accurate data collection. This requires effective systems, underpinned by legislation that's flexible enough for local implementation yet ensures consistency at a national level. This needs better multi-agency and cross-council work, improved training, dedicated officers, and access to welfare-compatible, evidence-based powers for robust and consistent enforcement (as recommended in the APGAW report on animal welfare enforcement²⁰). In Wales, the Welsh Government's local authority project – Animal Licensing Wales – is already making progress in this regard and it's vital this project is continued and funded by future governments.



CREATING A DEDICATED REGULATORY BODY FOR PETS

Citizens' assembly recommendations

'We want there to be a dedicated regulatory body, separate from local authorities, to ensure consistent and focused enforcement of pet ownership, welfare and breeding rules. This would improve the current "patchwork system" of regulation. There is a need to learn from other countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands about how they've implemented such a body, as well as from Switzerland on what stopped it from proceeding. Possible funding options include pet licenses and the veterinary industry.'

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

We welcome this bold idea for greater consistency and coherence in a fragmented regulatory system. At the RSPCA, we fully support stronger microchipping requirements and robust, welfare-compatible standards for all pet breeders and sellers.

¹⁸ RSPCA (2025). 'Taking the lead: Alternative approaches to effective dog control in the UK'. Available at: politicalanimal.rspca.org.uk/documents/d/political-animal/achieving-effective-dog-control-in-the-uk-web

¹⁹ RSPCA. Keeping primates as pets. Available at: rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/other/primates

²⁰ All-Party Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare. (2022) 'Improving the effectiveness of animal welfare enforcement'. Available at: apgaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Improving-Animal-Welfare-Enforcement-Report.pdf

As a minimum, we believe all breeders and sellers should be registered, and anyone breeding above a set threshold should be licensed. This aligns with the animal welfare sector's position. While a dedicated body – such as an equivalent to Animal Licensing Wales – could centralise expertise and improve enforcement in England, we recognise the need to explore its feasibility with regard to ownership and funding. APGAW has highlighted this need in their enforcement report²¹, calling for consolidated expertise through shared resources and collaboration. They recommend appointing dedicated animal welfare officers across the country and are establishing a National Companion Animal Welfare Panel, on which the RSPCA will serve. The panel will focus on improving enforcement within existing resources, while also contributing to wider discussions on empowering the public to drive better animal welfare.

While the recommendation calls for a dedicated regulatory body for England, we see a more pragmatic approach in reforming and properly resourcing the existing local authority system, as recommended in the APGAW report on enforcement. By investing greater resources into local authorities, enforcement of The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 (LAIA Regulations) and the equivalent Welsh legislation can be significantly strengthened. This should include consistent and effective enforcement, and an expansion of each country's LAIA Regulations' scope to cover all breeding animals. With multiple microchip databases currently operating, identifying individual pets remains a challenge. Current microchipping offers limited animal welfare benefits, and lacks monitoring and regulation, leaving data open to manipulation. Streamlining these systems, and ensuring each pet has one legally recognised owner responsible for their welfare, would make enforcement more effective and meaningful.

We also believe companion animal health must be prioritised, so we welcome the call for a system emphasising welfare and health reporting. We've worked with the APGAW and other animal welfare charities to create an Innate Health Assessment for dogs. APGAW wants this assessment mandated by governments to ensure only animals passing it are permitted to breed under licence. APGAW also seeks to expand the assessment to cover cat breeding.

“ This absolutely needs to happen, and it's kind of shocking that this doesn't already exist, considering we're a nation of companion animal lovers. ”

Citizens' assembly member

At the RSPCA, we'll continue to advocate for a streamlined, science-based approach to regulating breeding and improving companion animal welfare, ensuring pet health and welfare are central to these systems.

RSPCA recommendations

- **Defra and the Welsh Government should continue to support local authorities** in their enforcement functions, with clearly defined powers and conditions, and advance APGAW's initiatives. Defra's Responsible Dog Ownership Taskforce should also comprehensively review pet licensing in England and its alternatives. The RSPCA is conducting research to provide valuable evidence to support this work and inform policy decisions. For example, in Northern Ireland, APGAW has called for registration of all dogs, which the government is considering. Additionally, APGAW has developed a pilot model for enforcement of licensing regulations for local authorities, police, animal welfare charities and Defra to improve animal welfare enforcement – an initiative the RSPCA strongly supports.
- **The current Welsh Government's local authority enforcement project, Animal Licensing Wales, should be continued** and funded by future governments to build upon its progress in enforcement.

²¹ All-Party Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare. (2022) 'Improving the effectiveness of animal welfare enforcement'. Available at: apgaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Improving-Animal-Welfare-Enforcement-Report.pdf

“ Absolutely invaluable. This should be the priority, in my opinion. Phasing out the breeding of brachycephalic dogs with severe health issues should be a key goal for this regulatory body. ”

Citizens' assembly member



Farming now

INCREASING WELFARE STANDARDS FOR FARMED ANIMALS

Citizens' assembly recommendations

'We want to see happy, healthy animals, and free range becoming the norm. We want to see farmers supported to enact higher welfare standards. This would involve:

- *Banning cages (including enriched cages) for all livestock.*
- *Returning to local or mobile abattoirs that reduce transport time for livestock.*
- *Incentives and support to produce slower-growing breeds of livestock, e.g. broiler chickens.*
- *Ensuring imported meat and all animal products (not only limited to human consumption) should meet or beat UK welfare standards.'*

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

The RSPCA fully supports this recommendation. We're actively working to drive meaningful change for farmed animals, including through a major behaviour change research project exploring how to shift consumer attitudes and behaviours to increase demand for higher-welfare chicken. We've also provided technical information and support to The Humane League, who, through a Judicial Review, challenged the government's policies permitting the use of fast-growing breeds of meat chickens being reared.

“ Over a billion chickens reared and slaughtered every year... that number really stuck with me. ”

Citizens' assembly member



Through our national campaigns, we continue to push for stronger farmed animal welfare standards²². For example, our Cage Free Future²³ campaign calls for the UK Government to show its commitment to improving the welfare of farmed animals by launching a consultation to end the use of cages and close confinement systems in England. Since 2024, over 21,000 people have supported us in calling for an end to cages and their use in farming. We also advocate for improvements to animal welfare at the time of slaughter. For instance, we have a live campaign to end the legal use of carbon dioxide gas (CO₂) to kill pigs, a method causing severe distress used on 90 percent of UK pigs (although not in Wales), and implement more humane alternatives. Over 22,400 people have backed this call, with signatures delivered to Defra in July 2025 to urge the UK Government to phase out CO₂ killing.

²² RSPCA. Campaign to improve farming standards. Available at: rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/farming

²³ RSPCA. End cramped and cruel cages for farm animals. Available at: rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/farmcages

“ This is a vital and long-overdue area of reform. I fully support banning cages and reducing transport times – animals deserve to live and die with dignity. ”

Citizens' assembly member

Through RSPCA Assured, our farmed animal welfare scheme, we help farming businesses to transition to higher-welfare practices, including using slower-growing, higher-welfare chicken breeds for meat and providing enriched living conditions for their animals. Over 1,800 RSPCA Assured-labelled products are stocked by most major UK retailers and served in restaurants²⁴. In 2024, more than 34 million land-dwelling animals, including 70 percent of laying hens and 24 percent of pigs, plus over

30 million salmon, were covered by the scheme, all meeting our world-respected RSPCA Welfare Standards for Farmed Animals²⁵. While this shows significant progress, much more is needed to expand higher-welfare farming across the country, highlighting the importance of this recommendation and public support.

We're pleased that after more than 100 years of campaigning, the UK Government banned the live export of animals from Great Britain for fattening and slaughter in 2024, which was also applied to Wales via legislative consent. This means that British farmed animals will no longer face horrendous journeys abroad, some lasting over four days, causing severe physical and mental suffering. Having achieved success for farmed animal welfare in exports, we seek the same commitment from the government regarding the welfare of imported farmed animals. In short, we champion the practical, policy and consumer changes needed to increase farmed animal welfare standards and are pleased the British public, through the citizens' assembly, also supports improving farmed animal welfare across England and Wales.

“ I definitely support this. I can't argue with it, really. There's just no excuse for intensive farming. ”

Citizens' assembly member



²⁴ RSPCA Assured. *Buying RSPCA Assured labelled products*. Available at: rspcaassured.org.uk

²⁵ RSPCA Assured. (2024) 'Annual Review 2024'. Available at: canva.com/design/DAG2gROY8bw/5jdkvk-0xMammR2qzYc77w/view

RSPCA recommendations

- To achieve all aspects of this recommendation, **Defra and the Welsh Government's support to improve farmed animal welfare is vital**. Both governments should lead in establishing and formalising higher-welfare farming standards and regulations in law, e.g. banning cages and close confinement systems; introducing further incentives and support to improve farmed animal welfare; and ensuring trade welfare standards aren't compromised for cheaper prices or productivity. Existing legislation must also be rigorously enforced to ensure these protections are effective.
- Following the Judicial Review into broiler chicken welfare, Defra and the Welsh Government should also explore how to support farmers in rearing higher-welfare breeds of meat chickens.
- We recognise that farmers are often limited by industry and supply chains, so **retailers, processors and food manufacturers also have a responsibility** to actively seek and source higher-welfare animal products, invest in higher-welfare systems, and only import animals that meet or exceed legal standards.

ENSURING TRANSPARENT, FAIR PRICES FOR HIGHER-WELFARE MEAT

Citizens' assembly recommendations

'We want the price of meat products to be dictated by the way animals are farmed and the cost of welfare standards, not by supermarket pricing structures. Supermarkets should not make greater margins on higher-welfare meat. This would involve:

- *Greater transparency on supermarket pricing models for different meat products.*
- *An enforced cap on the profit margins supermarkets can earn from higher-welfare meat products – ensuring farmers get a fair price and consumers not overcharged for higher-welfare meat.'*

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

The RSPCA supports the principles of this recommendation and agrees that farmers should receive fair prices for their products, pricing models should be more transparent, and greater efforts are needed to support and reward farmers. However, we don't believe an enforced price cap is the most effective solution. Stronger government schemes or market incentives for farmers are vital to drive this change.

“ Supermarkets making bigger profits from higher-welfare meat undermines trust and creates unfair pressure on farmers. ”

Citizens' assembly member

We acknowledge that higher-welfare farming can involve increased costs for farmers due to factors like longer rearing times for slower-growing breeds, more space, and enriched living conditions. This can translate to higher consumer prices. That's why we campaign for method-of-production food labelling, which is central to our Better Labels, Better Choices campaign²⁶ and a key focus of our advocacy work. This vital intervention will provide consumers with essential information about how animals were farmed. Our campaign has strong public support, with over 11,000 voices backing our call to the UK Government for a clear, accessible method of production food labelling system for England. In a recent government consultation on mandatory methods of production labelling, 99 percent of individuals who took part supported the idea²⁷. We believe this will empower consumers to make informed choices about animal welfare, while supporting farmers who prioritise higher-welfare standards. We also call on the Welsh Government to adopt the same approach, potentially with the UK Government. As part of this advocacy, we urge retailers to make higher-welfare meat more visible and affordable, ensuring transparency, fairness, and animal welfare go hand in hand.

RSPCA recommendations

- **Defra and the Welsh Government must drive transparent and fair prices for higher-welfare meat.** They're essential in designing and implementing policy frameworks, regulations and financial mechanisms to set transparency requirements and properly incentivise higher-welfare farming.
- **Retailers and food industry services have a key role** in adopting and implementing transparent pricing models – including paying farmers a fair price, stocking higher-welfare options, and making them accessible and affordable for consumers.

²⁶ RSPCA. *Change starts with choice*. Available at: rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/labelling

²⁷ Defra. (2025) *Summary of responses and government response*. Available at: gov.uk/government/consultations/fairer-food-labelling/outcome/summary-of-responses-and-government-response

PROVIDING GREATER SUPPORT FOR HIGHER-WELFARE FARMING

Citizens' assembly recommendations

'We want to see farmers, who want their animals to have 'a life worth living', to have a better chance and be incentivised to improve animal welfare. We want to improve welfare standards and grow the market for higher-welfare meat. We want all farming in the UK to follow the principles of high-welfare farming where animals experience the 'Five Freedoms' that animals are entitled to. We also want to see a move towards regenerative farming which minimises disturbance to the natural, ecological processes happening within the farm environment. In the next five years, we want to see a clear plan for phasing out intensive farming by 2035. We define intensive farming as rearing animals that are confined and do not experience the 'Five Freedoms'. This would involve:

- *Public campaigns to raise awareness of intensive farming and its alternatives including celebrity endorsements, social media, TV exposure and exhibitions.*
- *Improved tax incentives for farmers pursuing higher-welfare farming.*
- *Greater subsidies for farmers to transition to higher-welfare farming.*
- *Education and support for farmers to transition to higher-welfare farming.*
- *A Multi-functional Land Use Framework (MLUF) to help plan the transition, bringing all stakeholders to the table.*
- *Writing this shift into law so that it cannot be dismantled.'*

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

We welcome the ambition of the citizens' assembly and agree that campaigning, incentives and subsidies can help achieve their vision for higher-welfare farming. This recommendation aligns with our refreshed organisational strategy 'Together for Animal Welfare'²⁸, particularly our ambitions to end lower-welfare farming and reduce UK public consumption of animal products by 2050, while improving farmed animal welfare. While we're encouraged by this recommendation, we believe a systematic transformation of the current farming system by 2035 is highly ambitious, and a longer lead time would be more realistic.

“ This is a really important step if we want consumers to support higher-welfare farming. Pricing needs to reflect the real cost of good animal welfare. ”

Citizens' assembly member

²⁸ RSPCA. (2021) '2021–2030 Strategy: Together for animal welfare'. Available at: rspca.org.uk/documents/1494939/7712578/2021StrategyFull%2B%281%29.pdf

The citizens' assembly members called for all UK farmers to follow high welfare and regenerative principles, ensuring animals are free from negative welfare states as outlined in the Five Freedoms model²⁹. At the RSPCA, we aim for every farmed animal to live a good life, rather than just a life worth living.

“ This is a powerful and forward-thinking recommendation. Phasing out intensive farming is ambitious but necessary. ”

Citizens' assembly member

The RSPCA, in partnership with RSPCA Assured, is already working to improve farmed animal welfare standards and replace lower-welfare farming with higher-welfare farming. RSPCA Assured assesses and regularly monitors almost 4,000 farming businesses across the UK, ensuring animals are reared to RSPCA's Welfare Standards for Farmed Animals. These standards cover all aspects of the animals' lives, including rearing, transport and slaughter. We also run national campaigns to improve the lives of farmed animals and raise public awareness of the realities of lower-welfare farming, such as Cage Free Future³⁰ and Better Chicken³¹. Our policy and advocacy work engages with governments to push for stronger farmed animal welfare legislation and enforcement, including phasing out cages and embedding animal welfare into future farming policy. RSPCA Assured's Farming and Technical Engagement team provides practical guidance for farmers to adopt the higher-welfare conditions our RSPCA Welfare Standards for Farmed Animals lays out, and transition to higher-welfare farming systems.

RSPCA recommendations

- **Defra should bring forward legal frameworks to implement subsidies and incentives to improve farmed animal welfare, while the current legal framework in Wales should be built upon.** Effective implementation requires collaboration between governments, food and farming stakeholders, and advisory bodies to design and roll-out these initiatives. A model for this approach is the Sustainable Farming Incentive³², which provides farmers in England with financial rewards for taking actions that deliver environmental benefits. An equivalent scheme in Wales – the Sustainable Farming Scheme – is due to be rolled out in 2026.
- **The RSPCA will continue to campaign for higher-welfare farming,** including advocating for greater subsidies for farmers to help them improve animal welfare. Focused campaigns on urgent issues, such as ending cage-based systems, are vital to ensure farmed animal welfare is progressed in a meaningful way. We're also committed to strengthening partnerships with other animal welfare, farming and food charities and NGOs to drive improvements in farmed animal welfare and increase pressure on the government to accelerate the transition to higher-welfare farming practices. This includes continuing to drive up our RSPCA Welfare Standards for Farmed Animals on farms through RSPCA Assured.



²⁹ RSPCA Knowledgebase Australia. (2021) *What are the Five Freedoms of animal welfare?* Available at: kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-five-freedoms-of-animal-welfare

³⁰ RSPCA. *End cramped and cruel cages for farm animals.* Available at: rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/farmcages

³¹ RSPCA. *Demand better for broiler chickens.* Available at: rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/betterchicken

³² Gov.uk. (2022) *Sustainable Farming Incentive: guidance for applicants and agreement holders.* Available at: gov.uk/government/collections/sustainable-farming-incentive-guidance



EMBEDDING ANIMAL WELFARE INTO THE FUTURE OF LAND USE AND FARMING

Citizens' assembly recommendations

'We want to see animal welfare embedded at the heart of national land use planning and decision-making alongside goals like human health, food production, and protecting nature.'

We imagine a future where the use of land supports high-welfare farming, protects wildlife habitats (due to the pollution caused by intensive farming, high levels of greenhouse gases, etc.) and holds ethical treatment of animals as a priority, not an afterthought. This would involve:

- *Animal welfare organisations such as the RSPCA and the Animal Sentience Committee being formally involved in the ongoing development and implementation of the 'Land Use Framework' in England.*
- *The initial Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) consultation on Land Use has closed, but this is just the beginning of a longer process. Animal welfare should be part of all future decisions about how land is used.*
- *Change planning laws to consider animal welfare rather than how it is at present where laws only focus on environmental hazards. Participatory planning and consultation must also ensure that animal welfare is given priority.'*

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

The RSPCA supports the call to prioritise animal welfare in national land-use planning and decision-making, benefitting both farmed and wild animals. However, achieving this ambition requires a significant reduction in farmed animal numbers, adding complexity to the issue.

A key RSPCA priority is to significantly reduce animal product consumption by 2050, while improving the welfare of farmed animals through RSPCA Assured. With more than three-quarters of UK land used for agriculture³³ and millions of animals kept in lower-welfare farming systems each year, reducing the demand for these products can decrease reliance on these systems. Reducing farmed animal numbers can also free up land, protect wild animals and their habitats, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Our Eat Less, Eat Better campaign encourages reduced consumption of animal products and champions higher-welfare options when chosen³⁴. It promotes our RSPCA Assured label, which supports farmers committed to farming animals to higher-welfare standards.

“ I will try to eat less meat, especially from animals raised on low-welfare farms. ”

Citizens' assembly member

³³ RSPCA. *The future of Food and Farming*. Available at: rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/strategy/food-and-farming

³⁴ RSPCA Assured. *Eat Less, Eat Better*. Available at: rspcaassured.org.uk/about-us/britain-s-farmed-animals/eat-less-eat-better

RSPCA recommendations

- **The different strategies across food, land use management, nature recovery and climate should integrate animal health and welfare, and be joined up at national and local government levels.** This requires drawing on relevant expertise to inform policy and approaches.
- **Following the recent judicial review, local authority planning departments must recognise their ability to consider animal welfare** in planning decisions.
- **The Animal Sentience Committee should continue to scrutinise UK Government land use policies** to ensure animal welfare impacts are considered. This oversight is crucial to prevent land management, agricultural practices, and environmental policies from compromising the welfare of farmed, wild, or companion animals.

“ Land decisions shouldn’t just weigh up environmental and economic interests but also how animals, both wild and farmed, are affected. ”

Citizens' assembly member





Farming in the future

WELFARE LABELLING AND BUILDING AWARENESS AT POINT OF PURCHASE

Citizens' assembly recommendations

'We want shoppers to be able to make informed choices about the wellbeing and living conditions of the animals whose meat they buy. This could be achieved through mandatory welfare labelling; shifting buying habits towards both higher-welfare meat and alternative proteins. Increased public awareness will increase the pressure and accountability of retailers and farmers to improve animal welfare and provide well-priced alternatives. This would involve:

- Consulting on or conducting studies on consumer responses to labels, referencing results from cigarette packaging as an example. If labelling seems to have an impact, display a mandatory welfare score, paired with a drawn image (potentially anime), on the animal product packaging based on their living conditions.*
- Exploring other ideas for awareness about animal welfare in supermarket aisles, including welfare information on price labels so that this can be taken into account, and QR codes that link to more detailed and sensitive images of animals' living conditions. QR codes could also include versions aimed at children, including games or interactive learning activities relevant to animal welfare standards.*
- Public education campaigns via food bloggers and social media influencers, sharing about welfare of the animals in any products they are using.'*

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

The RSPCA is encouraged by this call for action. We advocate for mandatory method-of-production labelling on all animal products, providing consumers with clear, accessible information on how animals were farmed. It's encouraging to see public demand for this, and that clearly identifiable animal welfare standards enable more informed consumer choices.

“ People need clearer information on how their food is produced and on the alternatives they could try. Honest labelling would be a good place to start. ”

Citizens' assembly member

In 2024, Defra held an eight-week consultation on fairer food labelling for England, and in June 2025 published a summary of the responses received. The findings demonstrated strong public support for mandatory labelling reform, with 99 percent of individuals and 69 percent of organisations in favour³⁵. This, combined with citizens' assembly backing, creates a clear consensus for governments to act without delay, introducing mandatory welfare labelling to ensure consumers have clear and accurate information on the welfare standards of their food.

Our Kindness Index shows that 58 percent of people always or sometimes check labels on animal products to understand how the animals have been farmed or kept³⁶. The introduction of mandatory egg labelling in 2004 in the UK and EU, aimed at improving traceability, demonstrates how labelling can drive welfare-focused consumer choices. Since then, the market share of free-range eggs in the UK has grown from 22 percent in 2001³⁷ to around 60 percent today, with 95 percent of those sales coming from RSPCA Assured hens³⁸.

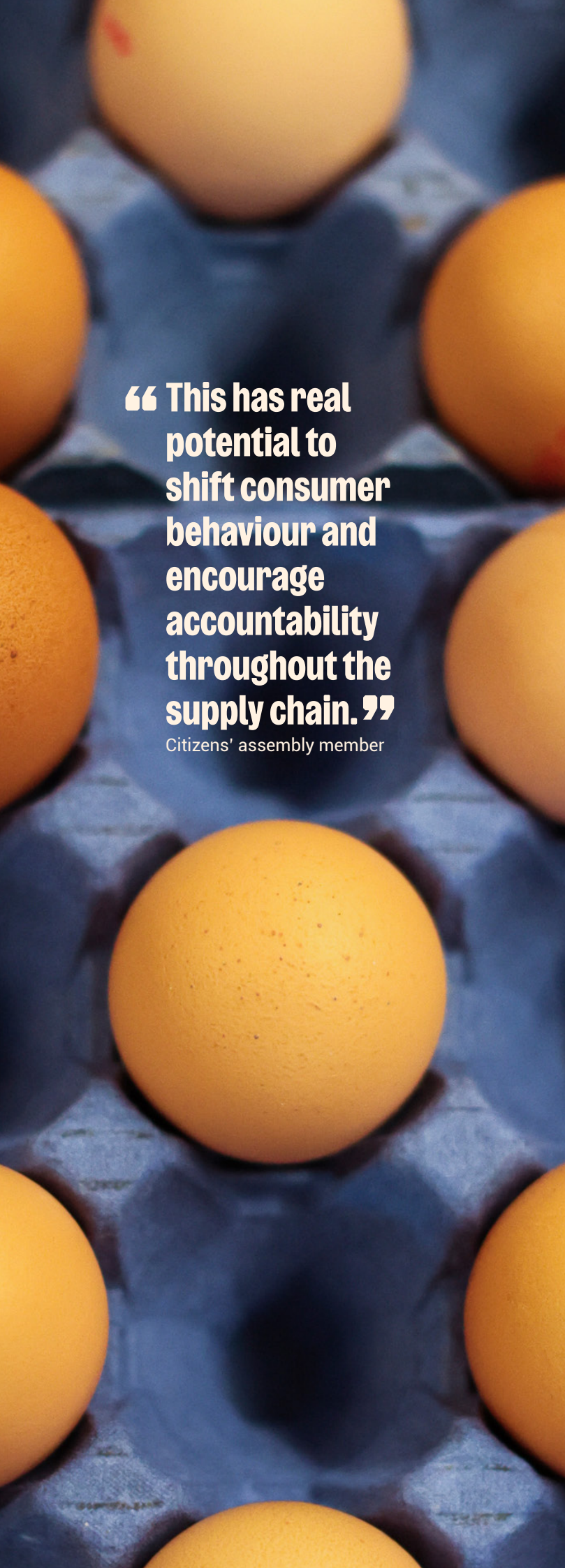


³⁵ Defra. (2025) Summary of responses and government response. Available at: gov.uk/government/consultations/fairer-food-labelling/outcome/summary-of-responses-and-government-response

³⁶ RSPCA. Kindness Index Report 2025. Available at: rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/latest/kindnessindex/2025/report#section3

³⁷ www.parliament.uk. (2011) Sustainable food. Available at: publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmenvaud/writev/food/m4.htm

³⁸ RSPCA. Change starts with a choice. Available at: rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/labelling



“ This has real potential to shift consumer behaviour and encourage accountability throughout the supply chain. ”

Citizens' assembly member

While the use of QR codes for public education is an innovative idea, practical implementation concerns prevent the RSPCA's full support at this time. However, our current research project with consultancy Behaviour Change explores how to shift attitudes and behaviours around buying higher-welfare chicken meat, including strategies such as imagery on labels and packaging to make higher-welfare chicken choices clearer and more compelling. Our RSPCA Assured label also promotes farmed animal welfare at the point of purchase, indicating products came from animals reared, transported and slaughtered to RSPCA Welfare Standards for Farmed Animals.

RSPCA recommendations

- **We urge the UK Government to respond to the results of the 2024 Fairer Food Labelling consultation** and implement mandatory method-of-production labelling on animal food products in England. We also call on the next Welsh Government to launch a similar consultation and consider a joint approach with the UK Government for mandatory labelling in Wales. By introducing clearer food labelling, and ensuring labelling standards (when implemented) are evidence-based, we can try to ensure a consistent and legally enforceable approach across the UK market.
- **Retailers and supermarkets also must act on this recommendation** by clearly displaying honest, clear and consistent animal welfare information on packaging and labels, empowering consumers to make informed choices. In-store public education campaigns can further raise awareness and encourage the purchase of higher-welfare products or plant-based alternatives.

SUPPORTING THE GROWTH AND UPTAKE OF ALTERNATIVE PROTEINS

Citizens' assembly recommendations

'We want shoppers to see alternative protein options as affordable, accessible and tasty, reducing demand for intensively farmed meat and alleviating animal suffering created by those production systems. This would involve:

- *Transparency about the ingredients of plant-based protein products and verification that they are not harmful or less healthy than animal-based proteins.*
- *Increasing funding and support for research and development to reduce market costs of processed plant-based protein products (such as fake chicken nuggets), so that they are more affordable.*



- *Campaigning to show the affordability, health and convenience of plant-based proteins through schools and universities, in-store marketing, public campaigns, public influencers (e.g. sportspeople), TV programming (e.g. cookery shows).*
- *Support a public conversation to explore the pros and cons of lab-grown meat, perhaps through a dedicated citizens' assembly. Potential outcomes could include decisions on the approval or ban of lab-grown meat for human consumption, grants to support further research and development, and if/how lab-grown meat should be regulated.*

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

The RSPCA is incredibly encouraged by this recommendation. We envision a future where the UK significantly reduces its reliance on animal products, leading to fewer farmed animals. We see alternative proteins, especially wholefood, plant-based options (such as lentils, tofu and chickpeas), and lab-grown meat, as a transformative opportunity to achieve this goal, and fully support efforts to boost their appeal and development. We also recognise the need for robust research to understand the implications of alternative proteins for animal welfare and broader sustainability. We believe the further development and adoption of alternative proteins (excluding insect protein) holds significant potential to improve farmed animal welfare. We advocate for bold government support for innovation in this sector, coupled with initiatives that empower consumers to make informed

choices. This will help drive a meaningful shift away from conventional animal products towards a more compassionate, forward-thinking food system.

“ I see lab-grown meat as a future way forward, but the technology for industrial-scale production is in its infancy. ”

Citizens' assembly member

Growing evidence suggests cultivated meat, including lab-grown meat, could significantly reduce farmed animal numbers. In 2023, the RSPCA commissioned the Social Market Foundation to research alternative proteins' potential to improve animal welfare. Their report estimated that by 2040, alternative proteins could replace a third of meat consumed, potentially reducing animals reared in lower-welfare systems by over 300 million. The report also highlighted that the future growth of alternative proteins remains uncertain and dependent on technological advancements³⁹, reinforcing the call for further research and development funding.

³⁹ Social Market Foundation. (2023) *Alternative proteins could replace a third of meat by 2040*. Available at: smf.co.uk/alternative-proteins-could-replace-a-third-of-meat-by-2040

“ This is a smart and compassionate step towards reducing reliance on intensive farming. Making plant-based proteins more accessible and affordable will give people real choices. ”

Citizens' assembly member

RSPCA recommendations

- To support the growth and uptake of lab-grown proteins, the UK Government must establish clear standards, increase funding for research and development, and ensure fast-moving and robust regulation to guarantee safety, transparency and public health protection.
- Retailers and producers should also invest in growing the alternative proteins market, ensuring they're widely available, competitively priced, and appealing to consumers.

REGULATING HOW PRECISION BREEDING AND GENE EDITING IS USED IN FARMING

Citizens' assembly recommendations

- *'We want to ensure that, where gene editing and precision breeding is used in farming, it prioritises animal welfare and environmental sustainability, not just for increased profit and productivity.'*
- *We acknowledge the potential benefits of gene editing in terms of disease resistance, but without careful regulation, we are concerned that the adoption of these technologies could worsen animal suffering and lead to a range of unintended negative consequences. Decisions must be made with full research and understanding.'*

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

We have been, and continue to be, actively involved in advocating for stricter regulations on gene editing in animals. The RSPCA wouldn't oppose gene editing if it led to clear, demonstrable animal health or welfare benefits not otherwise achievable by alternative approaches⁴⁰, such as better husbandry or veterinary practice. In line with this, we welcome the recommendation to restrict gene editing to cases that prioritise animal welfare. However, we believe the scope should be explicitly expanded beyond farm animals, ensuring consistent protection for all.

“ We need to move with extreme caution in this area – animal welfare before profit opportunities. ”

Citizens' assembly member

RSPCA recommendations

- It's vital that **policymakers and regulators set appropriate regulations and standards** around precision breeding and gene editing, incorporating these into the guidelines of the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023, which already facilitates the use of precision breeding technologies in agriculture. Regulation of gene editing should explicitly be applied to all animals, including companion, wild and sporting animals. Rigorous due diligence should be applied to every proposed gene edit to ensure animal welfare and ethical practices aren't compromised.
- While the Act primarily applies to England, we're concerned about gene-edited products potentially entering Wales via the Internal Market Act without clear regulations. We therefore **urge the UK and Welsh Governments to work together through existing mechanisms, such as the Common Frameworks process, to provide clarity on the sale of these items in Wales.**

⁴⁰ RSPCA. (2025) 'RSPCA Policy Book'. Available at: rspca.org.uk/documents/d/rspca-policy_booklet_2025

USING TECHNOLOGY FOR MONITORING AND INCREASING ANIMAL WELFARE

Citizens' assembly recommendations

Note: Despite a clear sentiment towards the idea, the recommendation only achieved 73 percent support from the citizens' assembly members. To become a core recommendation, 75 percent support from members was needed.

'We want to see improved living conditions for farmed animals and stricter enforcement of existing regulations. We want to see technology playing a key role in monitoring animal welfare and how humans are interacting with animals. This would involve:

- *Helping farmers to adopt technology, particularly smaller farms with limited financial resources, potentially through government funding, commercial funding and regulatory frameworks.*
- *Providing financial and educational support reinforced by appropriate regulation with clear pathways to facilitate technology adoption.*
- *Enable partnerships between public bodies and private funders to support this, for example, through high-speed satellite internet.*
- *Encourage scaled pilot studies with farms, producers, and supermarkets to test different technologies. Clear guidelines to test and verify the effectiveness of technologies across different farm types and species before scaling. Sector-specific case studies to demonstrate welfare and productivity benefits, especially from farms already using AI (e.g. chicken farms tracking drinking behaviour or movement).*
- *Establish a sustainable funding mechanism with incentives for farmers to opt in. Create sustainable funding streams for adoption, maintenance, and staff training, not just pilot-phase support.*
- *Foster understanding among farmers that technology is a supportive tool, not a means of policing or enforcement.*
- *Build trust with farmers by defining transparent data use policies, ownership, privacy standards, and clear boundaries between welfare monitoring and enforcement.'*

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

Although this didn't receive full consensus to be a core recommendation, we believe it's still important to highlight. The underlying idea was strongly reflected in the vision for this topic, with assembly members expressing a clear desire for farmers to be encouraged and supported to use technologies, such as AI, to monitor and improve animal welfare.

“ It obviously depends on what technologies and how they're regulated... but generally, I'm on board. ”

Citizens' assembly member

The RSPCA advocates that any application of technology should only be used if it delivers a good life for each animal⁴¹. Technology has the potential to play a pivotal role in improving animal welfare, such as enabling more effective health monitoring. While we recognise these benefits, we caution against over-reliance on automation, which can prioritise efficiency and productivity at the expense of welfare within farming systems.

The Tech-centric scenario in the Wilberforce Report illustrates this risk; highlighting that where technologies increasingly automate and intensify farming systems for maximum output, animal welfare is often overlooked. For example, it envisions a future where animals are confined in facilities designed for production, behaviours are restricted, and intensive interventions, such as over-engineered breeds, are commonplace, highlighting the ethical and moral costs of misusing technology in farming⁴². To prevent this, competent and empathetic human observers are still essential to identify concerns not detected by technology. We therefore recommend that as nations, we ensure that existing and emerging technologies, like AI, are used to improve animal welfare and aren't used to further commodify or exploit them. The government needs to ensure effective guidance and regulations are in place so that technologies are only used in ways that help and not harm animals.

⁴¹ RSPCA. (2025) 'RSPCA Policy Book'. Available at: rspca.org.uk/documents/d/rspca/policy_booklet_2025

⁴² Firetail. (2024) 'The Wilberforce Report: The Future of Animal Wellbeing in 2050'. Available at: static1.squarespace.com/static/6515733a0c44ad143f07426b/t/66def3edc6171855527a4705/1725887483361/RSPCA+-+Wilberforce+Report+2024.pdf



The use of technology is a key priority for RSPCA Assured, helping to better support scheme members and improve farmed animal welfare. Over the past year, the organisation has explored innovations such as body-worn cameras and expanded use of CCTV, providing greater visibility of animal welfare across farms⁴³. These technologies have strengthened RSPCA's Welfare Standards for Farmed Animals, highlighted where members may need extra support, and increased consumer confidence in choosing products with the RSPCA Assured label. Looking ahead, emerging technologies will continue to be explored to ensure ongoing improvements in the lives of farmed animals.

RSPCA recommendations

- To achieve this vision over the next five years, we're **calling upon the Department of Digital Culture, Media and Sport to put in place an animal welfare code of practice** and stringent governance of AI to ensure such technology is only used to improve animal welfare, and for a similar code to be developed by the Welsh Government, too.
- Going forward, **the UK Government's AI Safety Institute also needs to assess the impact of AI on animals**, as well as ensuring effective legislation is in place so that AI can only help, and not harm animals.

⁴³ RSPCA Assured. *Impact report 2025*. Available at: canva.com/design/DAG2bXZlZks/vGwDpMn3Guj2NXlfr97mBQ/view#1



Human impact on wild animals

STRENGTHENING EXISTING WILDLIFE LAWS AND RESOURCING THEIR ENFORCEMENT

Citizens' assembly recommendations

'We want to see a culture of respect and compliance with wildlife conservation laws where enforcement is fair and constructive. We want laws to be regularly reviewed and strengthened through expert and community input, ensuring they remain effective and up to date. This would involve:

- *Stricter penalties and punishments for law-breakers, and increased resources to allow for greater enforcement.*
 - *Exploring a (part-) self-funding process whereby fines from lawbreakers are used to fund animal conservation efforts.*
 - *Researching alternative penalties (e.g. community service in wildlife habitat conservation).*
 - *High-profile cases of crackdowns to raise awareness.*
- *Exploring how technologies can be used to help with enforcement on a larger scale.*
- *Campaigns by groups who understand why laws exist and the impact of breaking them.*
- *Consider creating a dedicated Wildlife Law Review Board or similar body to oversee regular law updates and improvements and possibly review other laws to ensure that impact on wild animals is considered.'*

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

The RSPCA agrees that a greater focus on enforcement and stricter penalties for wildlife laws is needed, and supports the citizens' assembly's recommendation that technology could aid in scaling up enforcement. In addition to strengthening existing wildlife laws, we also believe new legislation is needed to bring about change, a top priority in our refreshed strategy to 2030⁴⁴.

“Habitat protection is absolutely vital. We need to re-learn how to live in better harmony with wildlife and the natural world.”

Citizens' assembly member

We're already calling for both governments to update and consolidate over 50 pieces of wildlife legislation into new single wildlife laws applicable to each country. Current wildlife legislation is often outdated (some dating back to the 1800s), and there's a disparity in penalties between wildlife and companion animal crimes (companion animal offences are often considerably higher).

Alongside Humane World for Animals UK, we've jointly commissioned research on wildlife law reform⁴⁵, exploring how wildlife law can better address welfare harms and making the case for new, welfare-centred Wildlife Acts. Based on this evidence, we're urging the UK Government and Welsh Government to update and consolidate current wildlife legislation with animal welfare at its core. To achieve this, we're calling on both governments, among other measures, to introduce stronger penalties for wildlife crime, ban all inhumane traps, and make wildlife crimes notifiable to improve analysis and identify trends⁴⁶. We're also developing a public-facing campaign to engage and secure support for these changes. We work closely with the National Rural Crime Network and National Wildlife Crime Unit to support their new strategy and priority delivery groups to tackle wildlife crime and enforce wildlife legislation effectively.

⁴⁴ RSPCA. (2021) '2021–2030 Strategy summary: Together for animal welfare'. Available at: rspca.org.uk/documents/1494939/7712578/2021StrategySummary.pdf

⁴⁵ Nurse, A., Henjy, H. (2025) 'Wildlife Law Reform', Anglia Ruskin Research Online (ARRO). Available at: [aru.figshare.com/articles/report/Wildlife_Law_Reform/28920425](https://www.figshare.com/articles/report/Wildlife_Law_Reform/28920425)

⁴⁶ RSPCA. Wildlife laws in the UK. Available at: rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/wildlife/laws

“ This is a really strong and much-needed recommendation. Wildlife laws are only as good as their enforcement and, right now, there are clear gaps. ”

Citizens' assembly member

RSPCA recommendations

- **The RSPCA is calling on Defra and the Welsh Government to introduce new legislation to protect wildlife**, consolidating and updating existing laws into new welfare-centred Wildlife Acts with stronger penalties for wildlife crimes.
- **The police must be empowered to utilise** new technologies to support more effective enforcement to prevent wildlife crimes. The Criminal Justice System should have access to a wider range of post-conviction penalties, from community service to custodial sentences for those convicted of such offences.

CREATING A 'COMMUNITY HABITAT SERVICE'

Citizens' assembly recommendations

'We want to see clear improvement in local habitats to support wild animals by directly involving people through a "Community Habitat Service" where people are called up to actively take part in restoring and protecting local habitats. This would involve:

- An awareness campaign to introduce and explain the concept of a "Community Habitat Service" – could be a national day of action (e.g. RSPCA Community Habitat Day), and run by local authorities or environmental agencies. Wildlife charities could identify local priority areas where wildlife habitats need support.



- Aim to make it a joyful opportunity for community cohesion and socialising – involving different stakeholders and organisations from the community (e.g. employers). Time commitments could be adjusted to suit the needs of each site and community, and opportunities should be accessible and flexible for those with accessibility and language needs.
- Animal welfare education in schools could link to a habitat regeneration project in local communities, with the potential of volunteer accreditation and/or certificate.
- Could provide or link to ongoing training opportunities for people going into employment (e.g. young people, those coming out of incarceration).
- Funding should be drawn from penalties and fines associated with those responsible for habitat destruction. Employers could offer two days leave per year for habitat education and restoration.'

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

We find this bold recommendation very interesting, with clear potential for wide-ranging benefits for animals. This initiative could ensure long-term care of habitats, creating safer and more diverse spaces for animals to find food, shelter and raise their young. We also believe it has the potential to improve the nation's mental and physical wellbeing. By encouraging people to engage with and care for our open spaces, more individuals will come to see them as shared environments with wildlife.



“ Could be linked to projects in schools, which work on enhancing local green spaces.”

Citizens' assembly member



At the RSPCA, we're already developing the habitats we're responsible for. We're making our wildlife rescue centres more nature-friendly, exploring conservation-focused welfare at these sites, and encouraging staff to volunteer in these efforts. We're also investigating sustainable alternatives for managing our locations to prevent harm to wildlife, such as reducing herbicide use and integrating equine and field management practices.

We actively promote wildlife-friendly gardening initiatives to the public, providing resources on our website for simple changes that support wildlife, create food sources, provide shelter, and make spaces safer for wildlife to thrive. These range from planting for pollinators or building hedgehog houses and bug hotels, to larger initiatives like creating water features or green roofs⁴⁷. Our 2025 Kindness Index shows that many people are already taking action to make spaces safer for wildlife: 48 percent have fed birds, 13 percent have joined a litter pick, and 27 percent have created habitats for wildlife in the past year. We'll continue to promote animal welfare in the conservation and wildlife sectors and, following the launch of our wildlife strategy refresh, will explore how the RSPCA can best support wild animals and define our role in their protection.

“ This is an adorable idea. [...] I love that it would be tailored to people's needs.”

Citizens' assembly member

RSPCA recommendations

- **We'd be keen to explore the development of a community habitat service with the UK and Welsh Governments, as well as local government.** This could include training and support for habitat projects, as well as running public engagement campaigns to encourage participation from community groups and local residents.
- **At the RSPCA, we'll continue to offer advice and support** to encourage the public to get involved in wildlife-friendly gardening and local community habitat and wildlife restoration initiatives.

⁴⁷ RSPCA. *Wildlife activities for your outdoor space*. Available at: rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/garden/pledge

BANNING ACTIVITIES WHERE ANIMALS ARE SHOT FOR SPORT

Citizens' assembly recommendations

'We want to ban any activities where animals are shot for 'sport'. There is no place for these activities in today's society, and the damage caused to wild animals and the natural environment by these activities are too large to ignore. We acknowledge the income that these activities generate for local economies, so we'd need to work with land owners to ensure the land is protected after the ban, and that alternative sources of income are created to positively impact the landscape, the land owners, local economies and wider society. The ban could take place gradually, and in the meantime an additional levy should be placed on these activities to help fund conservation and the protection of wild animals. However, taxing or charging for these activities would not be a long-term solution to the welfare concerns. The punishment for breaking this law should be strong enough that it does not simply become a fine for the people who do it.'

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

The RSPCA opposes the shooting for 'sport' of game birds and other animals. Sports and recreational activities shouldn't involve causing suffering to animals, so we fully support this recommendation. However, the RSPCA also calls for a ban on trail hunting and closing the loopholes in the Hunting Act 2004, which still permit illegal hunting. We urge the UK Government to address this by legislating for a ban on trail hunting and closing these legislative loopholes.

“ This is a bold and important stance. Killing animals purely for sport has no place in a society that claims to value welfare and respect for nature. ”

Citizens' assembly member

RSPCA recommendations

- **Defra should undertake a consultation to develop a legal framework that addresses the widespread animal welfare and environmental harms of shooting for sport and recreation.** The Welsh Government launched a relevant consultation in 2023 regarding the licensing of gamebird releases, but no such system has been implemented yet. We therefore call on the Welsh Government to introduce a licensing system for gamebird releases imminently.
- **Defra should launch the promised consultation on trail hunting** to explore how legislation can be put in place to end this harmful practice in both England and Wales.
- **Resources and training should be made available to enforcement and regulatory bodies** to enable them to monitor and investigate effectively.

ADVOCATING FOR, REGULATING AND ENFORCING WILD ANIMAL-FRIENDLY DEVELOPMENT

Citizens' assembly recommendations

'We want new and existing developments to be designed with wild animals and communities at their heart – where animals can thrive by being connected up through wildlife corridors and waterways. We want residents to feel informed and involved in wildlife-friendly, green living spaces. There is accountability for both developers and communities to support wildlife-friendly habitats. This would involve:

- *Connecting and supporting habitats tailored to the local areas by including nature-friendly infrastructure in all new and (where possible) existing developments, and through deep community engagement on local plans.*
- *Evidence and advocacy for the human benefits: build and strengthen the case to developers and the public that wildlife-friendly design benefits both animals and humans, and support this through community surveys and scientific research to gather insights around the co-benefits of enhancing spaces for wildlife and people.*



- *Accreditation and accountability: encourage sectors and companies to commission only accredited 'wildlife-friendly developers' to raise industry standards, create ongoing accountability measures, and update building regulations to include habitat-friendly design for existing home improvements, supermarkets, businesses and schools.*
- *Community involvement and support: community education should be engaging, local and relevant to that area. RSPCA (and other charities) to support communities by supplying habitat-friendly resources and kits.'*

RSPCA's response to the citizens' assembly recommendations

We support this recommendation, as it encourages the RSPCA to further develop our initial work on planning reform, particularly concerning the UK Government's Planning and Infrastructure Bill. The Bill currently lacks any reference to animal welfare in planning decisions, despite the clear impact of development and planning activities on animal welfare. We're collaborating with Wildlife and Countryside Link and conservation NGOs to ensure welfare harms are considered and to raise awareness of developers' duty of care towards wild animals. We advocate for this to be embedded within planning reform in England and will continue to monitor for equivalent opportunities in Wales.

We support the Animal Sentience Committee's June 2025 open letter to the Environment Food and Rural Affairs Committee and its recommendation that the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, along with all relevant planning and infrastructure policies, should include measures to mitigate adverse effects on sentient animals. This aligns with the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022⁴⁸. Suggested actions include avoiding breeding seasons, siting developments away from established habitats or feeding grounds, and translocating certain species to suitable, alternative habitats. We believe there's a significant opportunity to incorporate wildlife-friendly designs into planning and development guidance.

⁴⁸ Defra. (2025) *Planning policy changes, including the Planning and Infrastructure Bill: letter from the Animal Sentience Committee*. Available at: gov.uk/government/publications/animal-sentience-committee-letter-regarding-planning-policy-proposals/planning-policy-changes-including-the-planning-and-infrastructure-bill-letter-from-the-animal-sentience-committee#potential-approaches-to-paying-due-regard

“ I [believe] developers have a stronger role to play than they currently do; they maximise profits over welfare for the existing wildlife. ”

Citizens' assembly member

Earlier this year, a High Court ruling confirmed that animal welfare can be treated as a material consideration in planning law. This means local authorities are legally entitled to consider the animal welfare impacts of proposed developments when deciding whether to grant planning permission.

This ruling makes clear the relevance of animal welfare and reflects the vision of a society where development decisions acknowledge both human interests and animal welfare⁴⁹.

RSPCA recommendations

- **We're keen to explore with the Welsh Government and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) the potential for establishing a national framework to mandate wild animal-friendly design.** This framework could outline how biodiversity, habitat connectivity, and green infrastructure requirements are embedded in building regulations, planning law, and Environment Act targets.
- **Local planning departments** could lead in community engagement to ensure residents understand and support wildlife-friendly developments.
- Additionally, the **RSPCA will play a greater role in advocating for wild animals** in future discussions regarding planning reform.

⁴⁹ Bowles, E. (2025) *Animal welfare as a material consideration in planning law*. The Law Society Gazette. Available at: lawgazette.co.uk/practice-points/animal-welfare-as-a-material-consideration-in-planning-law/5124475.article



Conclusion

For the past two centuries, the RSPCA has been at the forefront of animal welfare, helping to change laws and transform societal attitudes and behaviour towards animals. However, as the Wilberforce Report highlights, animals face new and complex challenges, and we must act now to secure a safe and compassionate future for them. The Animal Futures project has demonstrated both the risks of inaction and the promising possibilities that emerge when people collaborate to build a better future for animals. It has underscored that as a nation, we face a crucial choice regarding animal welfare. Either we continue towards a future where animals are exploited and undervalued, or we commit to a new and promising future, implementing a new social contract between people and animals, one that's rooted in respect and compassion for animals.

The citizens' assembly has spoken with clarity and conviction, and their message is clear: if the UK is to build a future where animals are respected, protected and able to thrive, we must urgently transform how we treat all animals. Whether in our homes, on our farms, or in the wild, animals deserve lives that reflect their sentience and value. From strengthening education and pet ownership, to transforming farming systems and embedding animal welfare into planning and law, the recommendations provide a powerful roadmap for change. We welcome the assembly's vision for the future of animal welfare and value the time, input and discussions the assembly members contributed to achieve this bold yet comprehensive list of recommendations.

“ I am taking away that no two people had the same values for animal welfare but collectively we managed to agree and draw up recommendations. ”

Citizens' assembly member

At the RSPCA, we're proud to already be working towards this future through our advocacy and campaigns work, the RSPCA Assured scheme, and public education efforts. However, real transformation cannot be achieved by charities like us alone. Achieving this future will require government leadership and collaboration across the animal welfare sector and beyond. Clear and comprehensive legislation, funding support, and clear accountability from our key policymakers must underpin progress on all fronts, from regulating breeding practices and farming systems, to embedding animal welfare in land use planning and modernising outdated wildlife laws. Despite government legislation, a variety of stakeholders also have key roles to play in shaping the systems that support and value animal welfare, including farmers, pet owners, consumers, retailers, developers, enforcement bodies and local communities. These stakeholders must be empowered and equipped with the knowledge, tools and choices to align their actions with values that prioritise animal welfare.

Animals' futures are in our hands. If we all act together, we can build a society where every animal is cared for. The citizens' assembly has set out the vision and mechanisms to achieve this; now we must all work collaboratively to deliver it. It takes a society to make a difference, and the choices we make now will shape the future for all animals.

“ I have a far greater respect for animals and the environment, and a greater understanding of the things humans could and should do to support them. ”

Citizens' assembly member





Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

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