

Cross Party Group for Animal Welfare Minutes

17 November 2025 – Online Meeting (Zoom)

Attendance

Carolyn Thomas MS (Chair)	Member of the Senedd
Jamie Adair (Secretariat)	League Against Cruel Sports
Billie-jade Thomas	RSPCA
Charley Longster	Blue Cross
Chris Topping	Justice for Reggie
Chris Ward	Cats Protection
Craig Fellowes	Badger Trust
Dan Rose	Staff of Carolyn Thomas MS
Deborah Davies	Wales Against Animal Experiments
Isobel McNally	Animal Aid
James Fitch	Dogs Trust
Jessamy Korotoga	Animal Aid
Michelle Masterton-Smith	Animal Aid
Natalie Harvey	Naturewatch Foundation
Nic de Brauwere	Redwings Horse Sanctuary
Nigel Palmer	Badger Trust
Scott Fryer	Battersea Dogs & Cats Home
Teresa Amory	Gower Bird Hospital
Vanessa Waddon	Hope Rescue
Zoe Phillips	Monmouthshire County Council

Minutes

Item	Actions
<p>1. Welcome/Introductions</p> <p>Carolyn Thomas MS (CT) welcomed attendees to the meeting.</p> <p>The minutes for the previous meeting, 14 July 2025, were confirmed as an accurate record.</p> <p>Apologies were received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anne-Louise Davies, Welsh Local Government Association Fiona Pereria, Animal Aid Rachel Sharp, Wildlife Trusts Wales <p>It was noted that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of minute taking.</p>	

2. Badger Trust

Nigel Palmer, CEO, Badger Trust (NP)

Craig Fellowes, Wildlife Crime Manager, Badger Trust (CF)

CF highlighted how Wales remains a hotspot for badger-related offences, including shooting, poisoning, and sett blocking (often linked to hunts). Reporting remains inconsistent and heavily reliant on public submissions to the Badger Trust, RSPCA, League Against Cruel Sports, and police.

The presentation offered insight into two case studies, where prosecutions were made as a result of badger crime. There were also infographics that shared data on the links between badger crime and violent offences including domestic violence/abuse, and links to robbery, sexual offences, harassment, and threatening behaviour.

Lower reported figures in Wales compared to rest of the UK likely due to low reporting rates rather than fewer incidents (estimated reporting below 10% of actual cases). There are ways in which we can support improvement, including outreach and education to increase reporting and awareness.

Nevertheless, recording issues persist - wildlife crime is not Home Office recordable, and historically, recording has been informal and inconsistent. North Wales Police does have an established rural/wildlife crime team that does record related offences.

CT thanked CF for their presentation and expressed concerns regarding the forthcoming Planning & Infrastructure Bill. The Chair also congratulated Craig Fellowes on behalf of the group, for receiving an MBE for services to wildlife protection.

NP shared an update and overview on the release of the Badger Trusts first ever Manifesto for Badgers.

JA to share slides & Badger Trust 2026 Manifesto with the group.

3. Animal Aid: Animal Experimentation

Jessamy Korotoga, Head of Science, Animal Aid (JK)

JK presented on the key work in Wales to end animal testing, including the scale and types of experiments conducted, expert criticism of their validity, sources of funding, and examples of specific research currently taking place in Wales. This was a result of a recent petition on behalf of Wales Against Animal Experiments.

JK began by outlining the legal framework governing animal experimentation. Unlike animals in domestic or agricultural contexts, animals used in laboratories are not covered by the Animal Welfare Act but instead fall under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA). This legislation explicitly permits procedures that cause pain, suffering, distress, or lasting harm. The group was informed that,

despite recurring incidents of non-compliance in UK laboratories, there have been no prosecutions to date.

The discussion then covered the scale and nature of animal experimentation in Wales, including the number of procedures carried out in Welsh institutions, particularly universities, and the species involved. Last year in Wales, there were 25,718 procedures - the majority conducted within university research settings.

Ethical issues were highlighted, including the extreme suffering that animals can experience during procedures, and the systemic infrastructure that supports ongoing animal research, such as funding structures, academic career incentives, and oversight bodies (such as AWERBs and inspectors), which rarely encourage or enforce adoption of non-animal alternatives.

Scientifically, JK emphasised that differences between humans and other species limit the reliability of animal models, particularly for medical research. The group heard how these limitations can lead to inaccurate or misleading results, wasted resources, and lost opportunities to identify treatments for human patients.

There is an increasingly wide range of viable non-animal alternatives, some of which have already demonstrated considerable promise in areas such as rheumatoid arthritis research.

The group also discussed the broader opportunities for Wales to move away from animal research and become a leader in this space. There are changes in direction of national and international policy too. The UK Government has announced its roadmap to phase out animal use in science, while the US FDA has shown a similar intent to shift away from traditional animal testing. These developments reflect a wider global movement towards modern, ethical, and human-relevant research models.

CT thanked JK for the insightful presentation and suggested that the information presented would be useful if streamlined into a concise briefing and circulated to MSs and other politicians, including clear asks. The slides will also be shared with group members for further use.

JA to circulate slides with the group.

CT recommended condensing the information and sharing with candidates of the Senedd elections and MSs

4. Cats Protection: Cats and Their Stats (CATS) Report Wales

Chris Ward, Advocacy & Government Relations Officer – Wales, Cats Protection (CW)

CW presented on the findings of the *Cats and Their Stats (CATS) Report Wales*, the largest annual survey dedicated to understanding the lives of cats and the people who care for them in Wales. The report is an established survey that has been running for six years. It sees over 10,000 UK respondents, including cat owners and non-owners, and regional boosting enables analysis for devolved nations and year-on-year trend analysis. It aims to understand how best to support cats by understanding their owners.

The survey shows that 24% of adults in Wales own a cat (approx. 500,000 cats), which puts Wales on a par with England. However, overall, UK ownership has been declining since 2021, likely return to pre-pandemic levels of cat ownership. Ownership is rising among ages 18–34, though decreasing among those aged 35–44 and 55+. Wales has the highest proportion of owners in the UK who consider cats “part of the family”, reinforcing that Wales is a nation of cat lovers.

Market Trends - adoption remains a major route of acquiring a cat, but purchases of cats are rising, particularly online acquisition of cats. There is also an increase in pedigree purchases across the UK and Wales. Some sites don’t allow searching for ‘moggy,’ unintentionally steering buyers toward pedigrees.

There is also concern regarding people creating breeds of cats that live very low-quality lives due to the extreme traits that they've inherited (e.g., XL Bully cats, Scottish Fold (folded ears), hairless/short-leg combinations). These traits are associated with significant lifelong health issues. Cats Protection supports regulating breeding of cats and for these breeds to be banned.

Regulating Cat Breeding – Cats Protection proposes minimum standards that no cat should have more than six litters in their lifetime, no more than 3 litters in 2-year period, and retirement of breeding cats at 6 years, to ensure sufficient rest. It was also noted that dog breeding is already regulated in Wales, and there are opportunities to understand how these could apply to cat breeding.

Finally, there was a discussion on microchipping. In the Animal Welfare Plan for Wales, there was a commitment to consider compulsory microchipping for pet cats. Up to 26% of cats in Wales are not microchipped, and analysis shows there is lower microchipping among first-time cat owners.

Two Welsh Cats Protection centres (Wrexham & near Bridgend) reported two-thirds of incoming cats arrive unchipped. Centres become filled by lost but loved cats who occupy rescue space and resources. Opportunities to raise public awareness around benefits of microchipping cats and overcoming barriers.

CT recommended that the group continue to share relevant data with Members of the Senedd and encouraged proactive engagement with MSs to prompt them to raise formal questions with the Cabinet Secretary. CT also requested that the presentation slides be circulated to attendees and suggested that the creation of social-media-ready graphics for public communication would be particularly helpful.

JA to share slides with the group.

5. Cut the Chase Coalition Update

Billie-Jade Thomas, Senior Public Affairs Manager (Wales), RSPCA Cymru (BT)

<p>The <i>Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill</i> was formally introduced to the Senedd on 30 September 2025. It maintains strong cross-party support, though time is tight to pass it before the election.</p> <p>The Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee has been conducting Stage 1 scrutiny. The Committee will discuss the draft Stage 1 report at the next meeting and must publish their report by 5 December.</p> <p>If passed, implementation dates currently vary. Racing could end as early as 2027, or as late as 2030 under existing wording. Work is also underway to prepare for the rehoming of affected dogs through the Wales Greyhound Partnership, comprised of nine animal welfare organisations (including all Chase Coalition members), and is coordinating rehoming planning.</p> <p>The next major milestone will be the publication of the Stage 1 report and subsequent Senedd votes. Continued engagement with MSs will be essential to secure majority support.</p>	
<p>6. Updates from around the group</p> <p>There were no further updates from around the group.</p>	
<p>7. AOB & Close</p> <p>CT thanked all members for their contributions and expressed appreciation to the speakers for their presentations. Before closing, the Chair noted the great news that the Welsh Government has announced it will extend European Protected Species status to Beavers in Wales.</p> <p>CT invited members of the group to get in touch with any pressing priorities, emerging issues, or areas where they feel the group could make a difference. Please feel free to email jamiedadair@league.org.uk with any future work areas.</p> <p>Time and date of the next CPG meeting TBD</p> <p><i>Meeting was brought to a close</i></p>	