



## KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:

- Minister provided an update on the Departments position on fireworks and the progress on the Animal Welfare Pathway.
- [REDACTED] asked whether Minister was confident all the reforms within the Pathway could be delivered within the remainder of the mandate, to which Minister confirmed that remains the aim, noting that it is subject to getting necessary approvals from Executive.
- Cara Hunter, MLA, asked whether the Minister had discussed animal abuse with the Department of Justice (DoJ) Minister, noting that there was a particular case within Ms Hunter's constituency. Minister Muir advised that cannot discuss cases but invited Ms Hunter to write with any specific concerns. It was also highlighted that DoJ has indicated its intention to carry out a Sentencing Review, which will include fireworks and animal welfare, and encouraged the Group to feedback into that process.
- [REDACTED] provided a summary of discussions held between DAERA and the Public Prosecution Service (PSS) in relation to sentencing and how cases are progressed through courts, noting the vast majority of cases are progressed via Magistrates' court and a range of factors are considered before sentences are applied, such as admission of guilt and first-time offences.
- John Blair, MLA, added that the APG did engage with Judge Keowne in relation to sentencing, but felt Ministerial intervention was required to progress and noted thanks to DoJ Minister for initiating a sentencing review.
- Mr Blair further asked Minister what conversations had been held in relation to fireworks, Minister responded noting his commitment to working with the DoJ Minister on the sentencing review.
- [REDACTED] highlighted that whilst noise of fireworks is an issue, it is the unpredictability which causes main problem. As a mitigation to this, increased public messaging in advance of a firework display would be welcome. Furthermore, it would be beneficial if the DoJ considered proximity of rescue and rehoming organisations or other high-risk areas where animals are kept, prior to issuing a fireworks licence.
- [REDACTED] highlighted an observation that although there has been an increase in animal welfare reports and investigations, there has not been a corresponding increase in prosecutions. Furthermore, [REDACTED] considered that councils and DAERA, should process reports as the PSNI does by providing a reference number to the complainant. [REDACTED] explained there are significant differences; reporting an animal welfare concern where the reporting person has not been immediate impacted or harmed by the incident, is not equivalent to reporting a crime to which the person would be the injured party and would be therefore entitled to receive updates on. Additionally, it was explained enforcement bodies take a proportionate approach, using a range of tools including guidance and improvement notices when dealing with offences. Not every case results in prosecution.
- [REDACTED] asked how agencies can work together better to support enforcement and the timeline for introducing Lucy's Law. Minister responded emphasising the need for early reporting of clear and accurate information and welcomed offer to work more closely where appropriate. [REDACTED]

██████████ added there is regular ongoing formal and informal engagement between enforcement agencies throughout the year. The Minister advised that Lucys Law, requires Executive approval, which will be sought in coming months.

- ██████████ asked about engagement with animal welfare organisations on the veterinary fees review. Minister advised that Defra are leading the review and officials can check their engagement plans for Northern Irish stakeholders.

**ISSUES AGREED: (must be completed)**

N/A

**ACTION POINTS & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:**

- **ACTION 1:** Officials to check with Defra colleagues about engagement on veterinary fee review. **ACTION –** ██████████
- **ACTION 2:** Officials to discuss potential opportunities for closer working with animal welfare organisations on enforcement at the next inter agency meeting. **ACTION –** ██████████

Notes written by -

██████████

**DATE:**

3 February 2026

**Signed and Dated by most Senior Official in attendance:** ██████████

██████████, 04-02-26

**Signed and Dated by Minister/Private Secretary:**