



**To: All interested individuals and
organisations**

25 February 2015

Room 918, Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3SB
Telephone: 028 9052 4611

Dear Consultee,

**CONSULTATION ON THE INTERIM REPORT OF THE REVIEW OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WELFARE OF ANIMALS ACT (NI) 2011**

I am seeking your views on the Interim Report of the Review of the Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011 which is now available on the DARD and Department of Justice (DOJ) websites.

The consultation period will open on **Thursday 26 February 2015** and close on **Thursday 23 April 2015**.

Background

For almost 40 years, the main primary legislation regarding animal welfare was the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 1972. The legislation was replaced in 2011 by the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011 (the 2011 Act), which introduced a duty of care in respect of all protected animals and provided new enforcement powers to allow action to be taken to *prevent* animals from suffering, as opposed to the previous position whereby action could be taken only *after* suffering had occurred. It also increased penalties for animal welfare offences.

There has been considerable public, political, and media interest in the implementation of the 2011 Act, particularly with regard to non-farmed animals. The following Private Members' Motion was agreed by the Assembly on 31 March 2014 –

That this Assembly notes with concern the number of cases of extreme animal cruelty that have occurred recently, the low number of convictions and the failure to impose the maximum sentence available; and calls on the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in conjunction with the Minister for Justice,



to initiate a review of the implementation of animal cruelty legislation, particularly sentencing guidelines and practices, to ensure that the maximum effectiveness is being brought to bear to combat these crimes.

In response to this Motion, Minister Michelle O'Neill established a Review of the Implementation of the 2011 Act, which is chaired jointly by officials in DARD and DOJ.

This consultation is in relation to the Interim Report of that Review. The Interim Report sets out the emerging thinking and recommendations based on analysis of the evidence to date. In addition, it highlights those areas that require further consideration by the Review before recommendations can be made.

We would welcome your comments on the Interim Report and any further evidence you would like the Review to consider before a Final Report is published. The consultation documents are available on the DARD website at www.dardni.gov.uk/index/consultations, or on request by emailing animal.welfare@dardni.gov.uk, telephoning 028 9052 4611 or by writing to the address below. Alternative formats of the Interim Report can be made available on request.

Responses

You can respond to this consultation by emailing your response to:

animal.welfare@dardni.gov.uk

or by writing to:

Tanya Hill
Animal Identification, Legislation and Welfare Branch
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
Room 918, Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3SB

Please also complete and return the Consultation Respondee Template along with your response.

The closing date for receipt of responses is **Thursday 23 April 2015**. Any responses received after this date will not be considered.

Transparency

In line with our policy on openness, at the end of the consultation period, copies of responses we receive will be available on request. The information they contain may also be published in a summary of responses on the DARD website. If you do not consent to this, you must clearly request in writing that your response be treated confidentially by completing the enclosed Consultation Respondee Template. Any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system in email responses will not be treated as such a request. You should also be aware that there might be circumstances in which we will be required to communicate information to third parties on request, in order to comply with our obligations

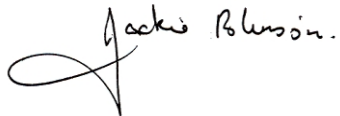
If you have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via Text Relay.
Making a call from a textphone dial 18001 + number.
Making a call from a telephone dial 18002 + number.



under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office, or visit their website at www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jackie Robinson', with a large, stylized loop at the beginning.

Jackie Robinson
Animal Identification, Legislation and Welfare Branch