

Animal Welfare Network for Wales new constitution (replacing Standing Orders approved in 2006)

1. Overview

- 1.1 The **Animal Welfare Network for Wales (AWNW, also referred to as the Network)** is an independent, self regulated network to facilitate and foster good relationships between all organisations working in Wales with an interest in animal welfare. It also serves to facilitate projects that have a direct benefit to animal welfare in communities in Wales.
- 1.2 The Network can only seek to develop policies where there is consensus amongst its members. The Network cannot overrule the individual policies of its members nor make representations of the views of its individual members – only the collective view of the Network
- 1.3 The majority of Network business will be conducted through the website www.awnwales.org and e-communications. As such it will be the responsibility of each member organisation to maintain their contact details, membership fee and all other requirements of the membership as detailed in this document
- 1.4 The Network will operate primarily through the medium of the internet, which will help to keep costs down for the Network and its members. Where appropriate however seminars, trainings, briefings and conferences for members and wider stakeholders may be organised – especially where there is a clear indication of need by members. Where such events take place, the member organisation may send up to the maximum delegates allowed, in addition to any representative who may be serving on the Management Committee/Executive Board (see 3.)
- 1.5 The secretariat must be provided by the member organisation of one of the three main officers as detailed below. The secretariat will include, but not be limited to providing at no cost to the Network (i) a member of staff for 15 hours a week trained in the Network's IT systems, publishing/design software and event management, (ii) all Information Technology equipment required to maintain Network business, and (iii) a dedicated telephone line
- 1.6 The Secretariat as detailed in 1.5 will be provided (unless amended by an AGM) by the RSPCA which will receive in exchange one ex-officio seat on the Management Committee (or Executive Board, whichever is in existence – see 3.)¹ The Committee or Board will have complete oversight of the work undertaken on its behalf by the RSPCA

¹ This was originally debated and approved by the AGM of 2008

- 1.7 The cost of membership per organisation each year will be £75.00² and can only be altered by a majority vote at an AGM. Any member joining in the first six months following the AGM will be required to pay the full membership for that Network year. Any organisation joining in the second half of the year will also be required to pay the total £75.00 however the membership period will run until second AGM (so potentially up to and not exceeding 18months)
- 1.8 The Welsh Government and Local Authorities in Wales will be considered ex-officio members of the Network. They will not have access to the member area of the website, but they will be sent relevant information and invited to actively participate in events, projects and conferences
- 1.9 The Network will regularly review potential funding avenues through grants, donations and sponsorship. Any such funds will be administered by the Management Committee or Executive Board (see 3.)
- 1.10 In the event of the closure of the AWNW, the Management Committee, by virtue of being elected by the membership body, agree to ensure all projects and workstreams are appropriately decommissioned; that any staff costs outstanding are paid to the employer and settled; any outstanding monies are owed; and this is done in a timely manner. The WCVA will be alerted at that outset as to the demise of the AWNW and their advice will serve as direction as to the appropriate recipient(s) (similar organisations only, and not individuals) for any remaining funds and assets held by the AWNW, irrespective of the source of each fund/ asset.³
- 1.11 All funding from grants will not under any circumstances be shared amongst AWNW members, but will be used solely for forwarding the purpose of the organisation.⁴
- 1.12 All funds will be audited, once a year, by an external advisor (not to be an AWNW member). The AWNW community bank account must at all times require no less than two signatories on all expenditure. All expenditure must be pre-authorized by the Management Committee, or where appropriate, such as new areas of work or costs exceeding £10,000, the full membership.⁵

2. Membership

2.1 Membership is open to any organisation working directly or indirectly in animal welfare with volunteers and/or paid staff in Wales. An organisation's head office need not be in Wales, however those organisations are encouraged to provide a point of contact active in Wales

2.2 All member organisations have equal status in the Network

² This was agreed at the AGM in 2012

³ This was agreed at the AGM in 2016

⁴ This was agreed at the AGM in 2016

⁵ This was agreed at the AGM in 2016

- 2.3 To join the Network the online form must be completed by the authorised representative of the member organisation and the agreed membership fee must be paid through the website using Paypal. Receipts will be supplied by Paypal so that authorised individuals can claim this cost back from their own organisation. No alternative payment methods (such as cheque) will be accepted
- 2.4 Only when the online membership form has been completed and payment received, will the member organisation receive their organisation's log in details which will allow them to access their member area of the website. The Board reserves the right to query a member organisation's information and to negotiate content
- 2.5 All contact details (and information) of a member organisation must be maintained by that organisation. The Network will not take responsibility for email communication not reaching the organisation where the contact details are incorrect and/or out of date
- 2.6 Signing up to the Network through the website is a clear indication that the member organisation agrees to be bound by the rules and procedures of this Network
- 2.7 Annual membership will be renewed on the 30th of September each year. All organisations will receive one reminder notification via email to re-join. If renewal is not completed i.e. payment is not received by the Network, the member organisation will be considered to be suspended and unable to attend the AGM and/or Network events or access the member's area of the website until payment is received
- 2.8 Organisations/individuals that have been convicted of any animal welfare, or animal cruelty, offence will be prevented from becoming members or removed from membership. The final decision on membership will rest with the Board

3. Executive Board and/or Management Committee

With a Network membership of 30 organisations or less

- 3.1 The Network will meet a minimum of three times per year. Each organisation will be required to send a representative. The quorum is set at 50% of member organisations. These meetings will constitute the full Executive Board
- 3.2 At the AGM, three officers⁶ – to be (i) Chair, (ii) Vice-chair (iii) Treasurer – to constitute a Management Committee (MC) – will be elected via ballot (with one vote per organisation) and the Executive Board will delegate to them the necessary management functions to maintain the day-to-day running of the Network. One of the officers will also act as representative for Third Sector Partnership Council meetings.
- 3.3 The Management Committee will meet as appropriate in order to conduct its required duties.
- 3.4 In order to stand on the Management Committee, the member must have a minimum meeting attendance of 75% (3 of the 4 previous meetings)

⁶ In addition to the RSPCA's ex-officio role

3.5 Basic minutes/notes of all meetings will be taken and posted to the website after approval at the following MC meeting.

With a Network membership of more than 30 organisations

3.6 The Executive Board (EB) will be elected via a ballot from the membership with one vote per organisation. There will be four officers⁷ in total with two (or three) elected every two years for a two year term. The EB will meet a minimum of six times per year. At the first meeting following the AGM the following officer roles will be elected be (i) Chair, (ii + iii) Vice-chair x2 (iv) Treasurer (v) Membership. One of the officers will also act as the representative for Third Sector Partnership Council meetings

3.7 The EB's remit will include the running of Network business, the website, AGM/conference, seminars, consultation responses, administering funds

3.8 For EB meeting decisions to be legitimate three officers must be present

3.9 If an EB member fails to attend two consecutive meetings without explanation they will cease to be a member of the EB and deemed to have resigned. The EB may co-opt another member from the wider AWWN membership

3.10 Basic minutes/notes of all meetings will be taken and posted to the website after approval at the following EB meeting.

4. Members' Code of Conduct

4.1 All member organisations and their representatives are required to treat their fellow Network members with courtesy and respect.

4.2 The Network is not the correct forum for complaints by one organisation about another and therefore, no such instances either verbal or written will be tolerated. The Network will inevitably include organisations with conflicting views, however all members will be required to refrain from criticising another member organisation's policies whilst at AWWN events, meetings or within any associated AWWN website (or other AWWN written) materials

4.3 Any organisation breaching 4.2 will be offered the chance to withdraw the material/comment and apologise and if this is to the satisfaction of the MC/EB no further action will be taken. If the comments are not withdrawn and no apology is made, the MC/EB, after considering the issue at a meeting – including hearing evidence from both sides – may vote to exclude the individual or organisation temporarily or permanently from the Network. The organisation may reapply for membership in writing, which will be considered by the next AGM

4.4 Any member organisation (or those wishing to become a member) must have aims consistent with the legislation governing animal welfare and not condone, permit, participate or be party to any illegal activity.

⁷ Ibid

4.5 As stated in 2.8, no individual with a conviction for an animal welfare or animal cruelty offence will be permitted membership to AWWN. It is the responsibility of each member organisation to ensure their representatives do not hold any such conviction

5. Annual General Meeting (AGM) & Conference

5.1 The AGM will be held in October each year and where possible include a conference on an animal welfare topic of interest

5.2 Attendance to AGM business/voting section of the day (elections, officer reports & constitutional amendments) will be free to members. The Network will cover its costs with an attendance charge for the conference section of the day. Each organisation will be allowed a maximum of one representative with voting rights, however the organisation may send any number of additional attendees (it is prepared to pay for) depending on the capacity of the venue

5.3 Notice of the AGM date will be posted at least two months in advance.

5.4 Any proposals, including changes to the Constitution, may be submitted by any member organisation and must be received by the MC/EB one month before the AGM

5.5 For any elections to be held at the AGM, nomination forms will be issued six weeks before the AGM and must be returned to the Network Manager at the latest two weeks before the AGM. Members can self nominate, but must be seconded by two other valid member organisations. Members can be elected in absentia

5.6 Any and all AWWN elections will be conducted using a system of First Past the Post

5.7 Should the desired number of Officers fail to be elected, the MC/EB have the ability to co-opt Officers from within the valid membership where the decision is unanimous

6. Website, communications, working groups and consultation responses

6.1 There will be a minimum of four newsletters each year. These newsletters will go, beyond the paid membership, to the entire Network contact base (which will amongst others include old members and other interested parties)

6.2 Interim communiqués, via email, will be issued to alert members to initiatives, projects, data collection and notification of Welsh Government announcements and consultations

6.3 Where consultations are run over 12 weeks and the MC/EB deem the subject area suitable, the Network will strive to produce a submission. Due to the need to allow time for a) drafting and b) re-circulating to secure authorisation from each member, draft text will be required by the fourth week. Given the nature of the Network's diverse membership, where consensus is difficult to secure no such submission will be made to the Welsh Government

- 6.4 The MC/EB and the Network Manager will maintain a website, email account, Facebook page, Twitter feed and any such social media or other tools appropriate to promoting the AWNW and animal welfare in Wales
- 6.5 The website will hold details of all relevant business of the Network, plus a members' only area. In addition a calendar of events and a regular blog will be retained with members and invited guests asked to produce copy
- 6.6 The Network Manager will act as editor for all website and social media copy and be required to refer any concerns to the MC/EB. The MC/EB will have final say on any copy, the content of the website and any other AWNW materials
- 6.7 The MC/EB may at any time and where resources allow convene working groups. Membership will be drawn from the AWNW membership and other identified stakeholders. Terms of Reference will be determined, and regularly reviewed, by the MC/EB

7. Welsh Government

Including both the Third Sector Compact and the Third Sector Partnership Council (TSPC)

- 7.1 The Compact between the Welsh Government and the Third Sector provides for a capacity building fund which currently supplies AWNW with a basic annual grant⁸. Each year there are a small amount of additional monies left from this fund for which the AWNW can bid as extra funding. All such monies will be detailed in the annual accounts and administered by the MC/EB.
- 7.2 The Welsh Government also provide for a Third Sector Partnership Council which meets twice a year with the Minister with responsibility for the sector. This Council has a seat for each section of the Third Sector and the AWNW will continue to seek re-election to the seat for animal welfare. The scheme also allows for meetings with individual Ministers. The AWNW will attend the meetings with the Minister responsible for animal welfare issues. Further information can be found at <http://www.wcva.org.uk/what-we-do/representing-the-sector/third-sector-partnership-council>
- 7.3 Due to the nature of the topics covered, the MC/EB member elected to attend TSPC meetings must be able to demonstrate that they represent the diversity of the Network. As such their member organisation should be involved with three or more of the following areas: a) domestic/companion animal welfare, b) farm animal welfare, c) wild animal welfare, d) water mammals e) fish/aqua-culture and/or f) invertebrates & reptiles.

⁸ Please see the Q&A on the AWNW website to the most up to date figure for this fund