

## RSPCA involvement with the Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare

### APGAW

APGAW is a registered 'All-party group' governed by the rules set out by the guide<sup>1</sup> produced by the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. It is made up of MPs, Peers and associate members<sup>2</sup> from a wide range of political parties and organisations; all interested in animal welfare issues. Indeed, the politicians and organisations cover a broad spectrum with sometimes opposing views on issues which can encourage real debate.

APGAW aims to promote and further the case of animal welfare by all means available to the Parliaments at Westminster and in Europe. It seeks to influence the development and introduction of effective wide-ranging legislation to improve welfare and also acts as a discussion forum for politicians and welfare experts to consider different areas of concern.

### RSPCA provision of services

As the largest animal welfare organisation, covering the widest range of species and issues the RSPCA has provided the secretariat for the Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) since it was established in the late 1980s. The RSPCA does not run APGAW, it services it through administrative support and ensures an open and transparent approach is delivered by the Group.

The RSPCA pays for a part-time person to provide administrative support to the Officers of the Group so that it can be run effectively and efficiently. The main purpose for this is to ensure dialogue on animal welfare issues continues within Parliament and that there are opportunities to communicate with other welfare groups and to encourage collective working.

The Secretariat ensures that communications made by APGAW or on behalf of APGAW are accurate and balanced and reflect the considered opinion of the Group. The secretariat is able to call on the expertise of the RSPCA scientists at any time for information on issues.

### Officers of APGAW

The Officers of the Group are elected each year at the AGM by political members and there is no requirement for them to be supportive of the RSPCA's policies. They are elected to Chair and manage the Group as well as encourage debate about animal welfare issues. It is hoped that by having a wide range of interests, perspectives, knowledge and ideas the Officers can engender greater respect from external bodies and the media as well as encourage debate and consideration of animal welfare issues. Officers are, however, required to provide a minimum of three days per year to the Group's work and have an interest in the issue of animal welfare.

The current Officers of the Group are as follows and as can be seen all have a keen interest in animal welfare issues both currently and in previous jobs:

Position	Name	Party/constituency
Chairman	Neil Parish MP <sup>3</sup>	Con, Tiverton and Honiton
Vice Chairman	Jim Fitzpatrick MP <sup>4</sup>	Lab, Poplar and Limehouse

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/pcfs/all-party-groups/guide-to-the-rules-on-apgs.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> For a list of associate members please see <http://www.apgaw.org/about-apgaw/membership-directory>

<sup>3</sup> When in the European Parliament showed a great of interest in and worked on many animal welfare issues

<sup>4</sup> Former Defra Minister

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	Caroline Lucas MP <sup>3</sup> Mike Hancock MP, CBE	Green, Brighton Pavilion Lib Dem, Portsmouth, South
Treasurer	The Lord Soulsby of Swaffam Prior	Con
Secretary	Andrew Rosindell MP	Con, Romford

Where there may be a conflict of interest or it is deemed inappropriate for an Officer to Chair or speak on an issue then, as would be expected in any other field, that Officer is required to declare that interest if they wish to continue Chairing or speaking on that matter.

### APGAW policies

APGAW does not have any specific policies on issues other than from any recommendations it makes in working group reports<sup>5</sup> or if a vote<sup>6</sup> takes place or there is an agreed action at a meeting. It has and continues to remain a forum for debate and discussion where a wide range of views can be heard to encourage open and objective consideration of issues. Meetings offer opportunities for associate members to seek to influence recommendations and actions.

For further information please contact Marisa at [admin@apgaw.org](mailto:admin@apgaw.org)

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<sup>5</sup> For examples of reports please see [www.apgaw.org](http://www.apgaw.org)

<sup>6</sup> There has only been one vote on an issue that has produced policy in this way and that is on supporting a prohibition of shock collars when Ian Cawsey MP was Chairman