# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Animal Sentience** |
| **DATE** | **17 January 2018** |
| **BY** | **Lesley Griffiths AM, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs** |

Animal welfare is a priority for the Welsh Government and the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group with one of our strategic outcomes being “animals in Wales have a good quality of life”.

On 12 December 2017, I issued a Written Statement on the Welsh Government agreeing to the UK Parliament legislating by Act for England and Wales to increase the maximum sentence for animal cruelty offences from six months to five years. Those who commit the worst acts of animal cruelty should face tough punishments and maintaining a comparative sentencing regime across England and Wales is important to ensure clarity for enforcement agencies, the Courts and the public.

On the same day, the UK Government launched a Consultation on the draft Animal Welfare (Sentencing and Recognition of Sentience) Bill.

In addition to the sentencing element, the draft Bill sets out the Government “must have regard to the welfare needs of animals as sentient beings in formulating and implementing government policy”. This element of the draft Bill currently applies to Ministers of the Crown only and not to policies which have been devolved, such as animal welfare.

Our position on sentience is clear. We fully agree animals are sentient beings and I have written to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, agreeing to the inclusion of Wales in this sensitive element of the Bill. It is my intention to bring forward a Legislative Consent Motion in the National Assembly to allow this obligation to extend to Welsh Government Ministers as well as to Ministers of the Crown, when the Bill is introduced in Parliament.

Officials from Wales, working closely with colleagues in England, will ensure animal sentience is recognised appropriately for devolved matters in this important Bill.

The consultation closes on 31 January 2018 and I would encourage individuals and organisations interested in animal welfare to respond. The Consultation on the draft Animal Welfare (Sentencing and Recognition of Sentience) Bill can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-animal-welfare-sentencing-and-recognition-of-sentience-bill-2017>