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# NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

2 June 2026

## Cabinet

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**Title:** Use of Animals at Public Events

**Purpose:** To seek Cabinet approval of Guidelines and Policy relating to the use of animals at public events.

**Recommendation:** That Cabinet approves the Guidelines and Policy relating to the use of animals at public events at Appendix 1.

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### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council owns, or is responsible for, areas of land which from time to time are used to hold events of varying types and size. Over the past few years, discussions have taken place at various forums regarding the degree of control the Council has over community events and any potential risks that this might present. This has, however, largely been in the context of wider event controls and licensing which have now been, or are being, addressed.
- 1.2 At the full Council meeting on 14 May 2024, a motion was carried which instructed officers to carry out a review of Council policy in relation to the ban on letting Council-owned sites to organisations which utilise animals in the provision of entertainment. Although the effective ban on letting Council land where animals are used for public entertainment has been in place since 2012, this has been strengthened since 2018 when the Scottish Government enacted legislation which makes it an offence for circus operators to use wild animals in a travelling circus whilst in Scotland.
- 1.3 This report provides an update on the current position and seeks approval of proposed guidelines and policy for the use of animals at public events.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 Since 19 September 2012, as a result of a motion carried at a meeting of North Ayrshire Council, the letting of Council owned sites to travelling circuses or similar organisations which utilise animals in the provision of entertainment has been banned.
- 2.2 On 15th May 2024, a further Council motion was carried, which instructed officers to carry out a review of Council policy around the following principles:

- That Council adopts a refreshed approach to limit and control the presence of animals for entertainment in our venues, highways, parks and open spaces, where it is legally possible to do so
- That normally Council would not support animals being out of their natural environments for events where there is no clear benefit of education, competition leading to national competitions or recognised need for a competitive event. Any approval for the presence of animals would require to take account of animal welfare concerns, including appropriate refuge from crowds
- That pet shows for domesticated animals at community events would be permissible
- That the policy would cover considerations of land and premises use permissions, grant giving/conditions and licence

- 2.3 Although the effective ban on letting Council land where animals are used for public entertainment has been in place since 2012, this has been strengthened since 2018, when the Scottish Government enacted legislation which makes it an offence for circus operators to use wild animals in a travelling circus whilst in Scotland.
- 2.4 As a result of the general events development work by officers, discussions have taken place at both a Pan-Ayrshire level and internally with services such as Streetscene, Legal and Estates, to establish baseline information and how best to proceed with ensuring that best practice is adhered to and the terms of the motion are considered and met, as well as considering how this fits into the wider requirements to ensure we have a robust and sustainable event safety resource to meet statutory requirements, as well as local needs and demands.
- 2.5 The current policy, which is strictly adhered to in relation to commercial activities and events, as well as the ongoing effectiveness of the national legislation noted above, results in very few issues being reported to officers in relation to the use of animals on Council land. The policy and the legislation however, only cover travelling circuses and other such organisations.
- 2.6 Officers are aware that some events on Council owned land do involve animals at present. These generally take the form of educational activities and displays. Currently, the Council's Community Facilities team have a form which requires to be completed when a let is being agreed, and animals are proposed as part of the event. As part of their considerations, the Community Facilities team consult, where required, with the Council's Animal Health and Welfare Officer in Trading Standards for advice. Occasionally permission is not granted to have animals on their premises if there is no clear educational link. This has resulted in a few complaints.
- 2.7 In relation to other community events, both on Council land and on private property, previously it was not often clear or obvious whether animals were to be involved in the event. As an interim measure, and to inform this work, there is now an option on the online Community Event application form to notify the Council that animals will be present.
- 2.8 An assessment of the impact and suitability of the animals at events will still be required. At present, this is best placed with the responsible manager for the premises or the officer agreeing the let or permitting the event to take place when it relates to a

Council property, and with the event organiser - with the appropriate guidance from Council officers - when on private land.

2.9 The proposed policy and guidelines at Appendix 1 do not sit alone in the wider event safety and control work of the Council; this work has developed significantly over the past few years and includes:

- Ayrshire Local Resilience Partnership (ALRP) review of event safety arrangements across Ayrshire.
- Firework Control Zone Request Process
- Bonfire Permission Process
- Updated Public Entertainment Licence (PEL) Resolutions (bringing more events under the control of a PEL)
- Agreed Pan Ayrshire Safety Advisory Group Policy
- Agreed Pan Ayrshire Safety Advisory Group Matrix, which determines which events require additional scrutiny.
- Ongoing Pan Ayrshire/multi- agency work in relation to the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (otherwise known as Martyn's Law)

The revised PEL resolutions are of note and bring North Ayrshire into line with other authorities for bonfires and fireworks especially, which were essentially the catalyst for the concerns relating to events on Council land.

2.10 The draft policy and guidance at Appendix 1 focuses strictly on animal welfare matters. Health and safety matters (e.g., risk assessment, insurance, hand washing, waste disposal, crowd segregation, etc.) would be addressed as part of the normal Safety Advisory Group process, and/or through normal Environmental Health and or Licensing considerations. Enforcement of any animal welfare issues may include any or all of the following bodies: Trading Standards; Police Scotland; Scottish Society for the Prevent of Cruelty to Animals.

### **3. Proposals**

3.1 That Cabinet approves the policy and guidelines for the use of animals at public events at Appendix 1.

### **4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty**

#### **Financial**

4.1 None.

#### **Human Resources**

4.2 None.

#### **Legal**

4.3 The Council requires to meet its legal obligations in relation to events and event safety; the proposals contained in this report will enhance the Council's response.

## **Equality/Socio-economic**

4.4 None

## **Climate Change and Carbon**

4.5 None

## **Key Priorities**

4.6 The proposals contained within this report, ensuring that we have safe and compliant events in North Ayrshire, support North Ayrshire Council Plan strategic priorities in relation to 'Wellbeing'; 'Communities and Local Democracy'; and 'A Sustainable Council'.

## **Community Wealth Building**

4.7 None

## **Islands Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)**

4.8 None

## **United Nations Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**

4.9 None

## **Consumer Duty**

4.10 The proposals contained within this report, ensuring that we have safe and compliant events in North Ayrshire, supports the delivery of the consumer duty, particularly in relation to the 'Access' and 'Safety' principles, by ensuring legislation and regulation are upheld, and by considering and where possible addressing issues likely to cause harm.

## **5. Consultation**

5.1 Consultation has taken place both internally and externally, including at Pan Ayrshire level, as part of the extensive and ongoing event safety work led by the Ayrshire Local Resilience Partnership.

David W. Hammond  
Executive Director (Communities and Housing)

For further information please contact **Scott McKenzie , Senior Manager (Protective Services)**, on [01294 324347](tel:01294 324347).

## **Background Papers**

- Meeting of North Ayrshire Council, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2012 - [Agenda Document Pack](#)
- Meeting of North Ayrshire Council, 15th May 2024 - [Agenda Contents](#)

## Appendix 1

### North Ayrshire Council - Draft Guidelines and Policy for Animals at Public Events

The use (for performance, display or exhibition) of wild animals in travelling circuses is prohibited under the Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (Scotland) Act 2018.

In all other cases, if an event is the subject of a Public Entertainment Licence, any and all conditions pertaining to animals shall be adhered to.

#### General Considerations

- Events including animals which are organised by a recognised and approved body will generally be permitted e.g. dog shows, sheep dog trials, horse racing etc. if all other event related approvals are in place and the organisations credentials are checked.
- Events including animals where there is a recognised cultural or historic significance will generally be permitted if all other event related approvals are in place.
- Events including animals which have an educational and/or therapeutic purpose will generally be permitted if all other event related approvals are in place. This will require some consideration by the responsible manager/event organiser as an activity which is considered educational or therapeutic in one setting may not be so in another.

#### Animal Welfare

Events which include animals including agricultural shows, ridings or theatre productions must ensure that best welfare practices are observed.

- A performing animal licence is required for anyone who exhibits or trains a performing animal.
- A welfare plan should be drawn up which covers all reasonably foreseeable risks and veterinary personnel available to ensure prevention of infectious diseases and also treatment in the event of accidents.
- The welfare plan should also take account of the five freedoms as set out in the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006:
  - Freedom from hunger and thirst by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
  - Freedom from discomfort by providing an appropriate environment, including shelter and comfortable rest area.
  - Freedom from pain, injury or disease by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment
  - Freedom to express normal behaviour by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
  - Freedom from fear and distress by ensuring conditions and treatment that avoid mental suffering.
- As with all (human) attendees at an event, the event organiser also has a duty of care to ensure the safety and well-being of animals.

## North Ayrshire Council

# Equality & Children's Rights Impact Assessment (Screening Form)

**Please Note:** Before you begin, is this version the most up to date? You can download the most recent version on [Connects](#). Screenings and ECRIAs should be included with relevant Committee Reports and may be published on our website.

This screening form encompasses key pieces of legislation which the Council needs to assess its activities against. This form should assist in deciding whether a full impact assessment is required.

- The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that we demonstrate that we are making decisions in a fair, transparent and accountable way. The Council must show that it has considered the needs and rights of people with protected characteristics.
- Where decisions affect young people, we must consider the 'Rights of the Child', under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- We must consider the Socio-Economic Impact under the Fairer Scotland Duty.
- We need to consider whether any of our Islands may be impacted differently from the mainland under the Island's Act.
- We also need to consider whether 'consumers' of our Services will be impacted under the Consumer Duty.

The various duties require the Council to assess the 'impact' of proposals thoroughly before any decisions are taken. This should be proportionate to the decision that is being made and should be carried out as early as possible in the process. It can then be repeated as the policy/proposal is progressed. Further Guidance on carrying out an impact assessment can be found in our Equalities pages on [Connects](#).

### 1. Proposal

**Title:** Use of Animals for Entertainment on Council Land

**Budget reference number and heading if appropriate (or not applicable):**

N/A

**Amount (£) of saving if appropriate (or not applicable):**

N/A

**Service:** Housing and Public Protection (but policy impacts all services)

**Lead officer:** Scott McKenzie

**List of participants in the assessment:** Scott McKenzie

**Date completed:** 25/03/2025

## 2. What are the main aims of the proposal?

The proposal is to create a policy which provides a framework to facilitate consideration of the animal health and welfare issues associated with the use of animals for entertainment purposes on Council land.

## 3. What data, research or other evidence was used for this screening?

A report prepared for ELT on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 forms the basis of the evidence, with this in turn having been informed by extensive research, discussions with other local authorities and internal working groups and discussions across the relevant council services such as Estates, Legal, Streetscene and Protective Services. The overarching legislative framework is the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006.

## 4. Screening questions

### **Does the proposal affect service users, employees or the wider community – particularly services that are known to be important to protected groups?**

Please delete whichever statement is **not** applicable from the text below:

~~Yes, the proposal does affect service users, employees or the wider community and specifically to services that are known to be important to particular protected groups.~~

No, the proposal does not affect service users, employees or the wider community and specifically to services that are known to be important to particular protected groups.

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### **Is it a major proposal, significantly affecting how services are delivered or how other organisations operate?**

Please delete whichever statement is **not** applicable from the text below:

~~Yes, it is a major proposal, significantly affecting how services are delivered or how other organisations operate.~~

No, it is not a major proposal, significantly affecting how services are delivered or how other organisations operate.

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### **Does it relate to an area where there are known inequalities or has significant potential for reducing inequalities or improving outcomes?**

Please delete whichever statement is **not** applicable from the text below:

~~Yes, it does relate to an area where there are known inequalities or has significant potential for reducing inequalities or improving outcomes.~~

Version: 7.0

No, it does not relate to an area where there are known inequalities or has significant potential for reducing inequalities or improving outcomes.

## 5. Impact

### Are there any impacts on the following groups?

Age (young/old people); Disability (physical and learning disabilities); Gender Re-assignment; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race and Ethnic Origin; Religion or Belief; Sex; Sexual Orientation; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Care Experienced; Fairer Scotland Duty; Human Rights; Other (Homelessness, rural, carers, part-time workers, etc)

~~Yes (please list)~~

No

~~Unsure~~

If yes or unsure, you should consider carrying out a full impact assessment.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

## 6. The Fairer Scotland Duty – (reducing the socio-economic impact of our policies, strategies and budget decisions)

Does the proposal have any negative (or potential) positive impacts that need to be explored in more detail? (Please provide a brief summary)

The proposal is centred on animal health and welfare and therefore this does not apply.

## 7. Children's Rights (UNCRC)

Does the proposal have any impact in relation to the UNCRC articles for Children's Rights?

The proposal is centred on animal health and welfare and therefore this does not apply. The proposal would prevent access to animals at events which were considered to be kept or showed under poor health and welfare conditions. In such circumstances there would be limited opportunities in terms of articles 28 and 31 anyway.

## 8. Island Proofing

Are there any special considerations for the island communities within North Ayrshire?

The proposal is centred on animal health and welfare and therefore this does not apply.

## **9. Consumer Duty**

Is your proposal a decision that will impact on consumers? (The definition of consumer is 'an individual or a small business that purchases, uses or receives goods or services in Scotland, that are supplied either by a business or a public body'. Please see [What is the Consumer Duty](#) for more details)

Click or tap here to enter text.

## **10. Have any cross-cutting impacts been identified from other Council Services or Partner Agencies (such as discrimination across multiple groups or accumulated effects of multiple proposals on a single group)?**

The proposal is centred on animal health and welfare and therefore no impacts have been identified.

## **11. Has there been any engagement or consultation on the proposal with any groups, services or partner organisations that could help inform the impact assessment?**

As the proposal is centred on the established Animal Health and Welfare Scotland Act consultation on the principles would have taken place during the legislative process. The implementation in terms of a policy have been discussed with the relevant Council services.

## **12. What are the monitoring and review arrangements?**

The policy will be reviewed on a regular basis or when any issues or learning points are identified.

## **13. Considering this Equality Screening in its entirety, what is your recommended next step? (Please explain your decision.)**

Screening Only no further assessment is required. (Your explanation must include how this decision will be monitored and reviewed as the policy / decision is implemented.)

The policy will be progressed through ELT, PAP and Cabinet and if any potential impacts are identified this will be reconsidered. Likewise it will be further considered at the point of review, likely to be in 1 years time initially.

Or

~~Full Impact Assessment Required~~

Click or tap here to enter text.

Version: 7.0

## 14. Authorisation

Policy Lead/Manager:



Date: 25/03/2026

Head of Service: Click or tap here to enter text.

Date: Click or tap to enter a date.