

COPY

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Lords Bill Minister for the Online Safety Bill

Sent by email

24 April 2023

Dear Lord Parkinson,

Online Safety Bill & animal welfare

We are writing to highlight an opportunity for the Government to demonstrate its commitment to animal welfare, through acceptance of an amendment recently tabled to the Online Safety Bill.

In the [Action Plan for Animal Welfare](#) (2021) the Government pledged to “*continue to raise the bar*” for animal welfare in the UK. As the enclosed briefing sets out, the pioneering nature of the Online Safety Bill provides an opportunity to do just that.

The duties the Bill places on social media companies to protect users from specified types of harmful content could be extended, to include content showing animal cruelty. This form of content is [growing](#) in prevalence and causes harm to viewers (especially children). Social media companies have shown little appetite to take proactive action to prevent these harms.

[Amendment 134](#), recently tabled to the Online Safety Bill by Lord Stevenson of Balmacara and the Lord Bishop of St Albans would address this, by adding animal abuse content to the specified types of priority offences in schedule 7 of the Bill.

By accepting this modest expansion in Bill scope, the Government could require online platform providers to do more to stop the growing spread of animal cruelty content. Such a ‘raising of the bar’ would bolster the UK’s role as a global leader for animal welfare. It would also allow the Government to show that it is giving practical consideration to the effect of policy upon the welfare of animals as sentient beings, in fulfillment of the requirements of the Animal Sentience Act 2022.

As organisations working on the animal welfare frontline, we hope that you will closely consider the case for this amendment, which would further both the objectives of the Online Safety Bill and the Government's welcome animal welfare commitments.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Bass

Senior Director of Campaigns and Public Affairs, Humane Society International UK
Chair of Wildlife & Countryside Link Animal Welfare Strategy Group

This letter is supported by the following members of the Wildlife & Countryside Link Animal Welfare Strategy Group:



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Replies can be sent to matt@wcl.org.uk

CC: Rt Hon Lord Benyon, Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Enclosed: Briefing from Wildlife & Countryside Link on the Online Safety Bill and animal welfare.