

Media release from Cats Protection

10 March 2016



Northern Ireland's first Manifesto for Cats launched to improve feline welfare

Northern Ireland's first ever 'Manifesto for Cats' was launched today (10 March) to put feline welfare on the political agenda ahead of the Northern Ireland Assembly elections in May.

The UK's largest cat charity, Cats Protection, has produced the 10-point document to highlight actions which are urgently needed to protect cats from abandonment, harm and neglect.

The charity is hoping the public will back the feline manifesto after survey findings showed that animal welfare matters more to voters in Northern Ireland than anywhere else in the UK.

The YouGov poll asked voters to name issues that determine how they cast their vote. In Northern Ireland, 21 per cent of those surveyed named animal welfare as such an issue – the highest anywhere in the UK and far ahead of the national average of 14 per cent.

Cats Protection's Advocacy Manager Jacqui Cuff said the manifesto would call on key policy-makers to implement measures to improve the long-term welfare of cats in Northern Ireland.

She said: "Animal welfare is hugely important to voters in Northern Ireland and it's important that their voices are heard. We want to see politicians taking on board their concerns and helping to shape a better future for cats.

"Over the past few years, we have been contacted about a worrying number of issues that our supporters and the general public want us to raise with the Northern Ireland Executive. Delivery of the manifesto would improve the lives of thousands of cats and protect them from harm.

"On a daily basis we hear and witness instances where cats suffer unimaginable pain and suffering – from being the unintended victim of a snare or trying to survive without food or shelter as an unwanted and abandoned stray on the streets.

“Policies need to change and politicians can make that happen. As we approach the 2016 Northern Ireland Assembly elections in May we are calling on existing and prospective MLAs to get behind our Manifesto for Cats: Northern Ireland to ensure much-needed improvements to animal welfare issues involving cats are put in place.”

Recent survey statistics show that 13 per cent of households in Northern Ireland own one or more cats – an estimated 130,000 cats.

Cats Protection is the UK’s largest cat charity and operates four volunteer-run branches in Northern Ireland alongside its Belfast Adoption Centre.

Priorities in the charity’s Manifesto for Cats: Northern Ireland include updating the law to control the breeding and sale of cats, a ban on snares and the inclusion of animal welfare into the Northern Irish curriculum.

It also includes calls to improve the effectiveness of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, and asks for Government recognition of the needs of people living in rented housing or care homes to keep their pets.

To view the Manifesto for Cats: Northern Ireland, please www.cats.org.uk/manifestonorthernireland

More information about the work of Cats Protection can be found at www.cats.org.uk

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Notes to Editors:

1. Cats Protection is the UK’s leading feline welfare charity and helps over 205,000 cats each year through a national network of over 250 volunteer-run branches and 32 centres.
2. Cats Protection’s vision is a world where every cat is treated with kindness and an understanding of its needs.
3. YouGov survey quoted can be found at https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/l50ymvzeao/YG-Archive-140201-WASP.pdf
4. Pet population figures taken from PFMA research for Cats Protection March 31, 2015

5. Cats Protection's registered charity number is 203644 (England and Wales) and SC037711 (Scotland). Founded as the Cats Protection League in 1927, the charity adopted the name Cats Protection in 1998. We ask that you use the name Cats Protection when referring to the charity in all published material.

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For further information or an interview, please contact Cats Protection's Media Office on 01825 741 911, at media.office@cats.org.uk, or @CPMediaTeam on Twitter.

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