



SOCIAL RESEARCH NUMBER:
118/2025
PUBLICATION DATE:
03/12/2025

Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Review

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

Title: **Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Review**

Subtitle:

Author(s): Jennifer Maher & Harriet Pierpoint

Full Research Report: Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Review; Maher & Pierpoint (2025). *Title*. Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR report number 118/2025.>

Available at: <hyperlink: <https://www.gov.wales/wales-animal-health-and-welfare-framework-review>>

Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

For further information please contact:

Name: Joshua Headington

Division: Knowledge and Analytical Services (KAS)

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

Tel: 03000252728

Email: climateandenvironmentresearch@gov.wales

Contents

CONTENTS	1
LIST OF TABLES	2
LIST OF FIGURES	3
GLOSSARY	4
1. INTRODUCTION	6
2. METHODOLOGY	16
3. FINDINGS	26
4. CONCLUSION	65
5. RECOMMENDATIONS	70
6. REFERENCES	75
7. APPENDICES	77

List of Tables

Table 1: Overview of methodology, sampling approach and sample.....	18
Table 2: Summary of the coding system used to identify participants.....	23
Table 3: Descriptors used in the findings to indicate the approximate proportion of participants who commented on a topic.....	25
Table 4: The policies the Framework aligns with, according to questionnaire respondents	47

List of Figures

Figure 1: Overview of the 5 WAHW Framework principles.	7
Figure 2: WAHW Framework 5 strategic outcomes	8
Figure 3: Overview of Framework governance structure and key stakeholders.....	11
Figure 4: WAHW Framework Group role	12
Figure 5: Current IP key priorities	13

Glossary

Acronym/Keyword	Definition
AHW	Animal Health and Welfare
AHIC	Animal Health Improvement Cycle set out in the WAHW Framework IP 2022 to 2024
AWNW	Animal Welfare Network Wales
AWPW	Animal Welfare Plan for Wales 2021 to 2026
AWA	Animal Welfare Act
BVD	Bovine Viral Diarrhoea, an infectious disease in cattle
CAWGW	Companion Animal Welfare Group Wales
CHAWG	Cattle Health and Welfare Group which merged with SHAWG to form the Ruminant Health & Welfare Group
COVID-19	Coronavirus
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, UK Government Department
EU	European Union
Framework	Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework
FG	Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group
Framework Monitoring Team	OCVO Wales Government Department which oversees and provides secretariat function for the Framework
GB	Great Britain
GB Strategy	Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain
IP	Framework Implementation Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
One Health	One Health is an “integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and inter-dependent” (One Health High Level Expert Panel 2021)
One Welfare	One Welfare highlights the interconnections between animal welfare, human wellbeing, and the environment. It promotes transdisciplinary collaboration to improve

	welfare outcomes across these domains and supports global objectives such as food security, sustainability and reducing human and animal suffering (One Welfare 2025)
OCVO	Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises, with personnel and revenue below a threshold
Stakeholders	A stakeholder is a party that has an interest in the outcomes of the AHWF, they can both affect or be affected by the Framework (e.g. communities, interest groups)
SG	The Strategy Group does not currently exist; this refers to the expert group which may support the delivery of a future AHW Strategy (e.g. the new iteration of the Framework Group)
SWAG	Sheep Health and Welfare Group which merged with CHAWG to form the Ruminant Health & Welfare Group
TB	Tuberculosis, an infection disease in mammals
TB Tag	TB Technical Advisory Group
ToR	Terms of Reference
UK	United Kingdom
WAHW	Wales Animal Health and Welfare
WAHW Strategy	Wales Animal Health and Welfare Strategy
WFGA	Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

1. Introduction

In August 2024, the Welsh Government commissioned research to review and evaluate the [Wales Animal Health and Welfare \(WAHW\) Framework \(2014\)](#) and make recommendations for its future iteration as a WAHW Strategy. There were 3 objectives for the research:

- to evaluate the Framework (2014 to 2024)
- to assess the extent to which Welsh Government priorities in relation to animal health and welfare are already covered or under development, in their other plans, schemes and strategies
- to make recommendations for the future WAHW Strategy, including its structure, content and duration

The term Strategy is used here to refer to the planned future iteration of what is currently called the Framework. Each objective was aligned with a set of research questions (see Section 2) and addressed by a multi-method research strategy. In line with guidance in the [Magenta Book](#) (2020) a process evaluation was employed. This involved 5 stages of data collection/analysis, with each stage informing the next: a scoping literature review, document analysis, interviews, focus groups and an online questionnaire (see Section 2).

This report summarises the findings of this independent study. The rest of this section provides a background to the WAHW Framework and Implementation Plan (IP) (2022 to 2024), the wider Animal Health and Welfare (AHW) context and an overview of the report.

1.1 Framework Development

Through devolution, the Welsh Government has direct responsibility for areas relating to AHW, such as health, economic development, environment, agriculture, fisheries and rural development. The Welsh Government's [Programme for government 2021 to 2026](#), which sets strategic priorities for Wales, includes commitments to AHW. In 2014, the [WAHW Framework](#) (Framework) was published; a 10-year overarching plan aimed at improving AHW standards across Wales through a collaborative and outcomes based approach. The Framework was developed in partnership with key stakeholders, including Local Authorities, AHW organisations and industry representatives. To operationalise the Framework, Implementation Plans (IP) were launched outlining specific actions, priorities and targets for each implementation period (i.e. 2015 to 16, 2016 to 17, 2017 to 18, 2019 to 20, 2022 to 24).

The Framework was influenced by the preceding [Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain \(GB Strategy\) \(2004, page 7\)](#), wherein Countryside Minister Carwyn Jones noted in the Ministerial Foreword "...it was evident that the improvement of the health and welfare of animals requires a financial investment and that there is a need to make clear the tangible benefits that will arise from these costs". The [GB Strategy](#) (2004, page 11) identified:

"the current animal health and welfare picture is in many ways neither adequate nor sustainable. We must work together to achieve standards which are not just acceptable

today, but which will also lay the foundation for meeting rising public demands in years to come”.

This comment highlights both the desire for collaboration and the forward-looking approach adopted by the Strategy. In the [Framework](#) (2014, page 4), this is phrased as: “If we want to make a difference in Wales and give ourselves the best chance of turning these outcomes into a future record of achievement, there needs to be a collective ownership of this Framework”.

1.2 WAHW Framework principles

The 5 key principles, detailed in Figure 1 and outlined in the GB AHW Strategy (2004), were adopted to guide the implementation of the [WAHW Framework \(2014, pages 7 to 9\)](#).

Figure 1: Overview of the 5 WAHW Framework principles.

1. **Promoting the benefits of animal health and welfare; prevention is better than cure.** This principle emphasises promoting good welfare and husbandry practices to prevent animal disease and welfare impacts.
2. **Understanding and accepting roles and responsibilities.** This value underpins multiple stakeholders’ collaboration, noting stakeholders need to both recognise their role and accept responsibility for their role in improving AHW standards ([Framework 2014, page 8](#)). These responsibilities expand to all parties involved in AHW, with animal owners and keepers, industry organisations, veterinarians and the government specifically mentioned.
3. **Working in partnership:** This principle emphasises the importance of increased co-operation and collaboration between the Welsh Government, industry representatives, livestock keepers and other animal owners and the need for cross-departmental collaboration.
4. **Ensuring a clearer understanding of costs and benefits:** The need for stakeholder and cross-departmental cooperation is also framed as part of understanding and sharing the costs and benefits of AHW interventions, which should be balanced across the sector.
5. **Delivering and enforcing standards effectively:** The final principle emphasises the importance of effective delivery and enforcement of AHW standards. Again, there is need for balance between reducing the regulatory burden on industry and meeting the obligatory requirements. Reference is made to international (European Union (EU) regulations and directives) obligations, which are no longer enforced in Wales due to the UK exit from the EU.

Source: Framework (2014) and authors’ own analysis.

Description of Figure 1: the figure lists and briefly describes the 5 WAHW Framework principles.

These guiding principles aimed to support Framework decision making, ensure a consistent and holistic approach and be responsive to the needs of all stakeholders. A decade on, their relevance remains, as these principles have been adopted by the [Animal Welfare Plan for Wales \[AWPW\] 2021 to 26 \(2021, page 7\)](#) (see Section 3.2 for further information).

1.3 WAHW Framework scope

The Framework specifies its focus as covering the health and welfare of all types of kept animals in Wales, including:

- farm livestock (e.g. cows, sheep, birds, goats, deer)
- companion animals (e.g. dogs, cats, reptiles, birds)
- working animals (e.g. horses, sheep dogs)
- animals involved in sports (e.g. horses)
- animals that are a part of aquaculture or aquafarming (e.g. salmon, shellfish)
- wildlife where their health or welfare is impacted by humans or there is a risk of disease transmission (e.g. rabbits, badgers)

1.4 WAHW Framework objectives and strategic outcomes

The overarching [Framework \(2014, page 4\)](#) objectives are to build on the progress made in Wales to raise AHW standards by:

- “using an approach focussed on delivery to achieve shared outcomes
- working in partnership to develop a robust monitoring and evaluation framework, underpinned by a strong evidence base”

Jointly, these objectives emphasise the importance of collective ownership of the Framework, facilitated through engaging multiple stakeholders (including the wider public) and together building a strong evidence base to inform policy decisions and to measure progress towards achieving the strategic outcomes. The 5 strategic outcomes (see Figure 2) are categorised according to the level of impact the Framework is expected to deliver for each.

Figure 2: WAHW Framework 5 strategic outcomes

Direct Impact

1. **Wales has healthy productive animals:** This outcome focuses on ensuring that animals in Wales are healthy and productive, which is essential for the wellbeing of the animals themselves and for the sustainability of the livestock industry.

2. **Animals in Wales have a good quality of life:** This outcome emphasises the importance of animal welfare and the need to ensure that all animals in Wales, whether they are farm animals, companion animals, or wildlife, have a good quality of life.
3. **People trust and have confidence in the way food is produced and the way public health is protected:** This outcome underscores the importance of maintaining high AHW standards to ensure consumer confidence and protect public health. It addresses the connection between AHW and public trust in food production and public health protection.

Indirect Impact

4. **Wales has a thriving rural economy:** This outcome recognises healthy animals are more productive, which is essential for profitable livestock and other animal industries. Conversely, unhealthy animals are costly as disease outbreaks pose a significant expense to the whole rural economy (e.g. Foot and Mouth Disease, see [Scott and others 2004](#)). In this way AHW is a key part of a successful rural economy.
5. **Wales has a high-quality environment:** This outcome acknowledges the intersection between AHW and environmental health. Healthy animals and sustainable animal production practices contribute to maintaining a high-quality environment in Wales.

Source: Framework (2014, page 7) and authors' own analysis.

Description of Figure 2: the figure lists and briefly describes the 5 WAHW Framework strategic outcomes.

The outcomes and objectives underline the multifaceted and interconnected nature of the issues impacting human and nonhuman animals and the opportunities for the Framework to inform broader societal concerns. This rounded focus and 'holistic approach' is carried into the Implementation Plans (IP), as noted in the introduction to the current IP ([2022 to 2024, page 7](#)). The intended lifespan of the Framework was 10 years (i.e. 2014 to 2024); however, the AWPW in 2021 reaffirmed the Welsh Government's commitment to these strategic outcomes until 2026.

1.5. WAHW Framework ways of working

The [Framework \(2014, page 5\)](#) recognised that the outcomes required close monitoring and flexibility "to respond to and take account of new developments and policy changes throughout its lifespan". The new results-based accountability (RBA, [Clear Impact, n.d](#)) framework used by the Welsh Government, mainly to inform the development of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, was particularly influential in the development of the Framework. The RBA provided a planning, performance management, and evaluation template to help public bodies improve outcomes for people and communities in a measurable and transparent way. This innovative¹ approach was

Footnotes

structured around 2 key components in the Framework: population accountability and programme and performance accountability ([WAHW Framework 2014, page 11](#)). In terms of population accountability, the 5 Framework principles (see Figure 1) “were agreed through public consultation to help embed the principle of partnership working from the outset”.

Programme and performance accountability referred to the process for effectively identifying the Framework priorities and monitoring and evaluating strategic outcomes progress. In considering annual priorities, key data and information would be logged on evidence cards and used to answer 6 questions set out in the Framework (2014, page 12). As part of this a data development agenda was included in the Framework. This involved the Framework Monitoring Team (discussed in Section 1.3) identifying existing reliable data, commissioning new data and inviting interested parties to gather data to inform the data development agenda. The IPs then outlined specific actions and initiatives related to these priorities, aimed at supporting the Framework objectives. While not all elements of the RBA were maintained in Framework delivery due to internal and external challenges (see Section 1.7 and 3.1), the flexible approach allowed for the adoption of alternative approaches. For example, in the most recent IP the Animal Health Improvement Cycle (AHIC) ^[footnote 2] was developed. This evidence-based process aims to enhance data and biosecurity measures to support the eradication of endemic diseases ([WAHW Implementation Plan 2022 to 2024, pages 10 to 12](#)).

1.6. Mechanisms for the implementation and delivery of the WAHW Framework

The [Framework \(2014\)](#) outlines several key mechanisms for the implementation and delivery of its strategic outcomes and objectives:

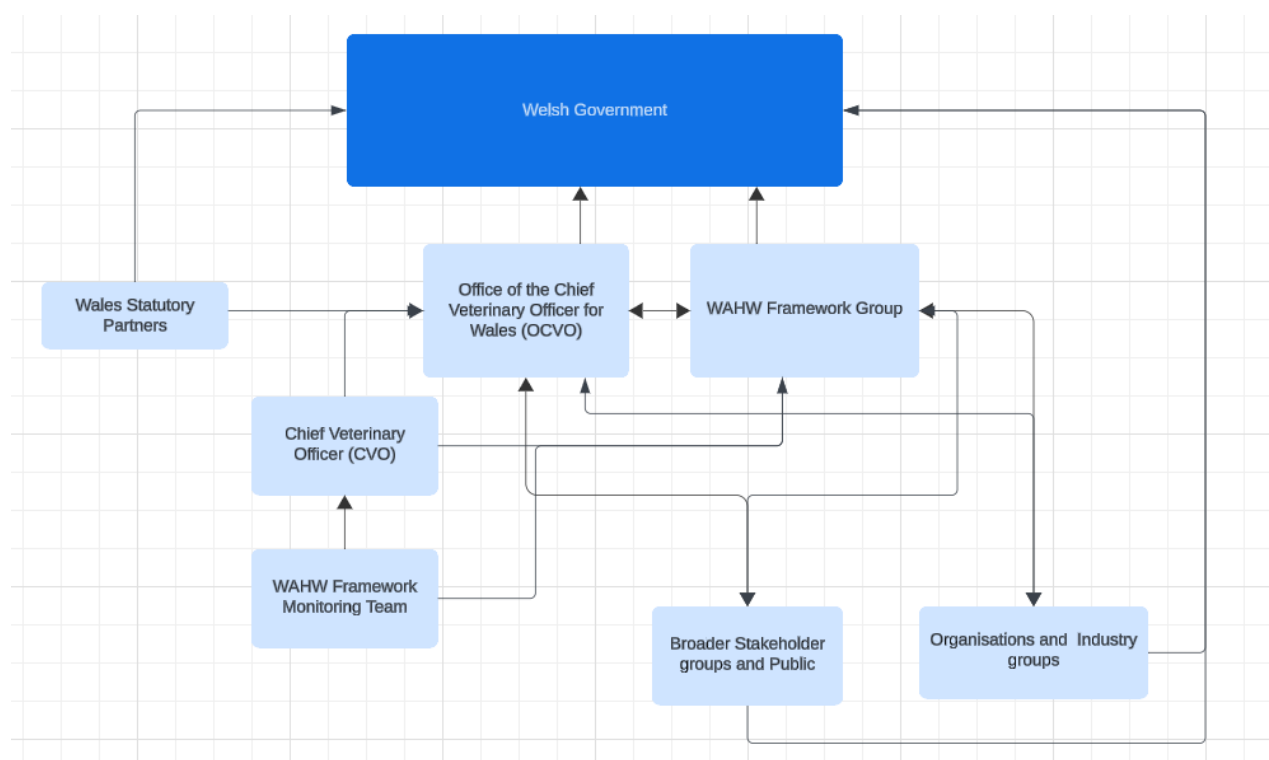
- Framework Group (FG)
- Framework Monitoring Team
- Partnership networks and database
- Annual IP

Each of these mechanisms are now discussed. The governance structure for implementing the Framework is outlined in Figure 3.

[1] This was an innovative approach as RBA was used for the first time by the Welsh Government in developing the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The OCVO was among the first to implement this approach in the Framework, with the understanding it may require further changes as it developed.

[2] Welsh Government in collaboration with the Framework Group developed a new animal health-planning concept for Wales in 2017 now called the AHIC. AHIC is a four-stage, evidence-based process aimed at driving “the productivity, profitability and sustainability of a livestock business, by optimising animal health and welfare” (WAHW Framework Implementation Plan 2022 to 2024).

Figure 3: Overview of Framework governance structure and key stakeholders



Source: [Framework \(2014\)](#) and authors' own analysis.

Description of Figure 3: a hierarchy chart which names and shows the relationship between the key bodies who deliver the Framework.

1.6.1. Framework Group

The FG is made up of publicly appointed experts from the AHW sector. They are assigned a crucial role in the implementation and delivery of the [Framework \(2014, pages 13 to 14\)](#), including strengthening the link between the Welsh Government and livestock keepers, animal owners and industry representatives and liaising with these partners. The Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales oversees the Framework Monitoring Team and sits on the FG, alongside a Chair and 7 other public figures, drawn from a broad range of sectors and areas of expertise. The members of the group are appointed for a period of 3 years^[footnote 3]. They meet formally on a quarterly basis and provide a communication, review, horizon scanning and spokesperson role. To enhance transparency, many of their meeting minutes are publicly available^[footnote 4].

Footnotes

[3] FG members can serve a second consecutive term of 3 years under public appointments rules.

[4] For example, see: [Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group Meeting, March 8 2019](#)

Initially, the FG role encompassed 8 broad tasks (see Figure 4). Importantly, the FG do not have the autonomy to make funding decisions, sign-off Service Level Agreements with delivery bodies, or to approve contingency plans or submissions. Likewise, they can advise on but not determine policy. These decisions remain the responsibility of the Welsh Government. The Group's quarterly meetings correspond with the intended Framework planning and reporting cycles. The FG can also establish specialist sub-groups ^[footnote 5] to support their role, these have involved members with specific expertise or interest collaborating on a time bound project.

Figure 4: WAHW Framework Group role

1. **Raising and considering new issues** which could impact achieving the Framework's strategic outcomes. This includes identifying emerging animal health and welfare threats, changes in the policy landscape and new scientific or technical developments that may require a response from the Welsh Government or the wider animal health and welfare community.
2. **Considering delivery of outcomes and priorities**, by providing advice and guidance to the Welsh Government on how best to allocate pressurised resources and prioritise actions to achieve the greatest impact.
3. **Challenging new and emerging policy** through the Group forum by scrutinising (evidence base, proportionality) these policies and their alignment with the Framework's strategic outcomes and objectives.
4. **Liaising with industry and gathering information through** the Group's diverse membership, whose networks can provide a valuable source of data, intelligence and insight into the practical realities of animal health and welfare on the ground.
5. **Ensuring continuous reviews of progress** against the Framework's strategic outcomes and objectives, including monitoring the execution of the annual implementation plan, providing feedback on progress updates and reviews and identifying areas for improvement or further action.
6. **Facilitating and streamlining communication** as a conduit between the Welsh Government, industry and other stakeholders to ensure essential information is disseminated effectively and efficiently.
7. **Establishing and maintaining links** to industry organisations and representative groups, as well as the many related broader social, economic and environmental sector groups (e.g. human health, education, poverty), to ensure the Framework remains relevant, responsive and connected to the context in which it operates.
8. **Performing a representative role** by acting as spokespeople on animal health and welfare issues to raise awareness of the Framework and promote the importance of animal health and welfare to a wider audience.

[5] As stated in the FG Terms of Reference: "The Group may establish subgroups to support its work. The Chair and Group will agree the remits of such groups".

Source: [Framework Group Terms of Reference 2019](#) and authors' own analysis.

Description of Figure 4: the figure lists and briefly describes the 8 broad tasks of the WAHW Framework Group role.

1.6.2 Framework Monitoring Team

The Framework Monitoring Team provide secretariat support to the FG and are responsible for coordinating key aspects of implementation and monitoring. This includes maintaining the central record of the data development agenda, coordinating the communications strategy and managing correspondence and queries related to the Framework. Their role included developing a stakeholder database, whereby stakeholders were encouraged to register their interests in the Framework and FG. This database aimed to support FG engagement with stakeholders and the key principle of implementing a collaborative AHW agenda.

1.6.3 Annual Framework Implementation Plans (IPs)

As part of the Framework planning and reporting cycle, the FG and Monitoring Team intended to publish a yearly IP. The IP outlined the agreed actions and core priorities for implementing the AHW Framework over each (annual or biannual) period. The IP focused on specific AHW issues reflecting the Welsh Government priorities and those identified by the FG. The IPs intended to provide flexibility to respond to changing AHW data and circumstances. The data development agenda, maintained and reviewed quarterly by the Framework Monitoring Team, supported and evidenced the IPs. As part of this, evidence cards were intended to capture the key information on each priority, including the outcomes to be improved, how progress will be measured, data requirements, current trends, important partners and proposed actions. This information informed a consistent approach in detailing the priorities in the IP ^[footnote 6], which were presented in short sections to facilitate accessibility. The IP also involved a mid-year and end-year review to ensure it reflected in-year developments. The FG were central to reviewing Framework progress and informing the IP. The current Plan ([IP 2022 to 2024](#)) is aligned with the AWPW and sets out the present Framework priorities and actions (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Current IP key priorities

- Headline aspirations: One Health, One Welfare, Biosecurity
- Disease Prevention: Animal Health Improvement Cycle (AHIC), Sustainable Use of Medicines, Livestock Identification, Veterinary Surveillance, International Trade
- Disease Eradication: Bovine Viral Diarrhoea, Sheep Scab, Bovine Tuberculosis, Contingency Planning for Exotic Notifiable Animal Diseases

Footnotes

[6] It was noted by OCVO these cards morphed into the implementation plan. The same information was presented for each priority in the IP.

- Welfare and Responsible Ownership: Farmed Animals, Companion Animals, Other Kept Animals, Lameness in Livestock.

Source: Framework [IP 2022 to 2024](#)

Description of Figure 5: the figure lists the priorities and actions detailed in the current Framework IP

1.7 Broader AHW context

In commissioning this study, the Welsh Government recognised the changing AHW landscape and developments in the Framework implementation and delivery. For example:

- the mechanisms for delivering the Framework have changed over the past decade (as outlined above)
- new challenges and opportunities in AHW have emerged, necessitating a review of its approach and priorities to ensure they remain relevant and effective, as explored in Section 3.1
- several plans, strategies and policies developed over the Framework's lifespan now directly or indirectly address its outcomes, further shaping the direction of the future strategy, as explored in Section 3.2

This section now briefly details the wider context impacting WAHW over the life of the Framework, including emerging AHW challenges and the opportunities provided through policy developments.

Over the last decade Wales has experienced considerable challenges in delivering on AHW. For example:

- outbreaks in infectious zoonotic ^[Footnote 7] diseases which have impacted human (e.g. Coronavirus (COVID-19)) and animal (e.g. Tuberculosis, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, Avian Influenza) health. Zoonotic diseases mostly inflict livestock, domesticated wildlife and companion animals ([World Health Organisation 2023](#))
- the COVID-19 pandemic and the UK's exit from the EU have heightened financial challenges for the Welsh Government and Framework stakeholders and partners. The Welsh farming sector, for example, has faced significant economic and social upheaval ([Welsh Government 2024](#)) (e.g. persistently high inflation and energy costs,

Footnotes

[7] These are among the 60% of infectious diseases which are zoonotic in origin ([Rahman and others 2020](#)), meaning infection can be transmitted between human and nonhuman animals. In Wales COVID-19 was reportedly only transmitted between humans. The transmission between human and nonhuman animals was believed to have occurred elsewhere by an animal infected with SARS-CoV-2.

global instability, volatile farmgate prices, rising rural crimes and substantial industry changes)

- In 2021, the Senedd declared a ‘nature emergency’ ([Noebels and others 2021](#)) in response to the continued decline in UK wildlife and biodiversity; the UK remains one of the least biodiverse countries worldwide ([UN 2021](#))

In line with the recent scientific and political acknowledgement that animals are sentient beings (UK Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022), public support for improved animal welfare has steadily increased ([RSPCA 2023](#); [CAF 2022](#); [IWA 2021](#)). Despite these developments, reported animal abuse in Wales has increased ([RSPCA 2022](#)), a robust illegal puppy trade exists ([Maher and Wyatt 2019](#)), wildlife crime and harm are rising ([Welsh Government 2023](#)) and irresponsible dog ownership is a significant concern ([NFU Mutual 2024](#); [Tulloch and others 2023](#)). These significant financial, social and sector challenges have disrupted the delivery of the Framework, necessitating a review of the Framework and its future iteration as a Strategy.

Alongside this difficult backdrop, several plans, strategies and policies have developed over the lifetime of the Framework, which directly and indirectly address Framework outcomes (see Section 3.2). The Welsh Government aims to leverage the successes of these initiatives, policies and programmes, while addressing lingering gaps and ensuring flexibility to navigate future shifts in the landscape. For example, the recent [AWPW 2021 to 26](#) has provided a strategic roadmap for animal welfare, while the [Bovine TB Eradication Programme](#) (2017) and [Animal and Environment Antimicrobial Resistance Plan](#) (2019) have established a partnership approach to disease eradication and improved health. The [Agriculture \(Wales\) Act 2023](#) has prioritised sustainable land management principles, aligning with objectives of the [Planning \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) and the overarching goals set forth in the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#). The [Sustainable Farming Scheme](#) (2025), places animals central to long-term environmental sustainability, enhanced biodiversity and mitigating the impacts of climate change. An assessment of how each of these policies align with the Framework AHW priorities is available in Appendix G.

1.8 Report overview

The report is divided into 5 sections:

1. This section – Introduction and overview
2. Methodology
3. Research findings
4. Conclusion
5. Key recommendations

2. Methodology

2.1 Research objectives and approach

This section provides an overview of the multi-method research strategy utilised to review and evaluate the [Wales Animal Health and Welfare \(WAHW\) Framework \(2014\)](#) (Framework) and make recommendations for its future iteration as a WAHW Strategy. The research addressed 3 objectives:

1. to evaluate the Framework (2014 to 2024)
2. to assess the extent to which Welsh Government priorities in relation to animal health and welfare are already covered or under development, in their other plans, schemes and strategies
3. to make recommendations for the future Wales AHW Strategy, including its structure, content and duration

The term Strategy is used here to refer to the planned future iteration of what is currently called the Framework.

Each objective was linked to a set of research questions:

1. The Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework (2014 to 2024)
 - What has worked well in the implementation and delivery of the Framework?
 - What may have improved the implementation and delivery of the Framework?
 - What is the role of the WAHW Group (Framework Group) in delivering the Framework?
 - How has the Group performed against the roles set out in their Terms of Reference and the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Strategy: Implementation Plan 2022 to 2024?
 - Are there any gaps in the current Framework which the Welsh Government should consider including in a future Animal Health and Welfare Strategy?
 - How engaged are stakeholders and animal owners with the current Framework and how might engagement be maximised?
2. Alignment with Existing Welsh Government Plans and Strategies
 - To what extent are Welsh Government animal health and welfare priorities already covered within existing plans and strategies? For example:
 - Animal Welfare Plan for Wales (2021 to 2026)
 - Bovine TB Eradication Programme

- Animal and Environment Antimicrobial Resistance Plan
 - The Welsh Government's Contingency Plan for Exotic Notifiable Diseases of Animals
 - Implementation Plan for the Healthy Bees Plan 2030
 - The Sustainable Farming Scheme
 - To what extent does the current Framework meet a need in articulating Welsh Government animal health and welfare priorities?
3. A Future Animal Health and Welfare Strategy
- To what extent might a future overarching Strategy be required to articulate wider Welsh Government animal health and welfare priorities, beyond those already articulated in specific plans and policies in Wales?
 - How should a future Strategy be structured and what level of detail should be included (e.g. are implementation plans important)?

This evaluation has followed the Central Government guidance on evaluation provided in the [Magenta Book](#) (2020). According to the guidance, an evaluation is a systematic assessment of an intervention, aimed at understanding how it has been implemented, what effect it has had and what can be improved. In line with this, a process evaluation was employed, involving 5 stages of data collection/analysis, with each stage informing the next, as shown in Table 1. This approach reflected the research objectives, project time frame and the resources available to engage with stakeholders ^[footnote 8]. It also aimed to maximise stakeholder accessibility and inclusivity by offering alternative ways to engage, such as focus groups or questionnaire completion, to accommodate stakeholder needs.

As the Framework had not previously been formally evaluated, empirical data was required to support document analysis. The principles and requirements for empirical data collection, outlined by professional codes of conduct and ethical practice and data protection (e.g. Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR) were followed by the research team. Each method is

Footnotes

[8] The rationale for adopting a principally qualitative strategy is that this enabled a deeper understanding of the Framework benefits and limitations and emerging issues in AHW which would influence a future Strategy. Additionally, multi-method designs compensate for individual methodological weaknesses, leading to more credible findings ([Hunter and Brewer 2016](#)). The integration of multiple approaches reduced bias, mitigating risks associated with relying on a single source and strengthening the overall robustness of the findings. Methodological coherence is enhanced ([Morse and others 2002](#)), as is validity and credibility (Copes and Miller 2015), as triangulation enables cross-validation of data from different sources.

detailed below and linked to the research objectives, followed by an overview of the ethical and data management considerations and methodological limitations.

Table 1: Overview of methodology, sampling approach and sample

Research objective	Method	Population	Sampling approach	Expected sample (participants)	Sample achieved (documents/ participants)
1	Scoping literature review	Academic Sources	n/a	n/a	4
1 and 2	Document analysis	Existing Welsh Government documents	Purposive	n/a	37
1, 2 and 3	Semi-structured Interview	Welsh Government OCVO Welsh Government Land Management Reform (LMR) Welsh Government Other	Purposive	7	6
1, 2 and 3	Focus Group	Framework Group Key stakeholder Groups Public	Purposive & Snowballing	38 (6 to 7 groups)	26 (5 groups)
1, 2 and 3	Questionnaire	OCVO & Welsh Government LMR Framework Group Key stakeholder Groups	Purposive & Snowballing	20	8

Source: authors' own summary.

Description of Table 1: the table outlines the 5 stages of data collection/analysis detailing how each addressed the research objectives, and the related population, sampling approach, desired sample and sample achieved.

2.2 Scoping review

The scoping literature review ^[footnote 9] of peer reviewed scholarly publications contributed to research objective 1 and related questions (Section 2.1). The review used electronic databases Find it ^[footnote 10], Google Scholar and Research Rabbit ^[footnote 11] to search for articles published between 2014 and 2024 which specifically mentioned the Framework (See Annex A for keywords and eligibility criteria). Only 4 articles, all published in one veterinary journal, were identified (see research limitations in Section 2.7). Key themes from these sources were collated, combined and summarised.

2.3 Document analysis

The document analysis contributed to research objectives 1 and 2 and related questions (Section 2.1). It involved a qualitative systematic approach to examining and interpreting documents to gain understanding and elicit meaning ([Bowen 2009](#)). This included analysis of 18 public facing policy documents and other relevant Welsh Government documentation, identified in collaboration with the Welsh Government (see Annex B). A further 19 internal documents, including the Framework Group meeting minutes (from June 2014 to June 2023), OVCO Team awayday comments and an evidence paper which preceded the Framework were also provided by Welsh Government for analysis. These documents were analysed in NVivo to identify themes and elicit excerpts. Document extracts are identified in the findings with D, the document type and date, if relevant (e.g. D: FG minutes March 2016). Table 2 provides a summary of the coding system used to identify the sources of data evidencing the findings.

2.4 Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews addressed all 3 research objectives and related questions (Section 2.1). These facilitated understanding of the development and implementation of the Framework and aspirations for a new AHW Strategy. Interviews were conducted with 6 Welsh Government policy team members and colleagues with duties relating to AHW. Interviews were guided by a topic guide (see Annex C), which offered freedom and flexibility to participants to elaborate on and move beyond these planned topics. Interview participants, identified by the Welsh Government, were contacted and invited to read the information sheet (available in English and Welsh). They were instructed to notify the researcher by email of a suitable date and time, if they wanted to engage in an online (Teams) interview (in English or Welsh). The interviews ranged between 45 and 120 minutes in length. With the participants' permission, they were recorded and later

Footnotes

[9] A scoping review is a type of evidence synthesis that aims to systematically identify and map the breadth of evidence available on a particular topic or field, within or across particular contexts. They help to identify gaps and limitations in the literature (Munn and others 2022).

[10] Findit is the University of South Wales search engine for electronic and print resources.

[11] Research Rabbit is an AI-powered application aimed at supporting academic literature searches through adaptive learning.

transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were uploaded to NVivo for thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a flexible data analysis approach which involves identifying themes and interpreting patterns in qualitative data (Braun and Clarke 2021). While the participants' views were anonymised, both the information sheet and interview introduction emphasised the possibility of participants being identified due to the small research population. To enhance anonymity, participants are identified in the findings simply by INT and a number (e.g. INT1).

2.5 Focus groups

The focus groups addressed all 3 research objectives and related questions (Figure 5). In line with the Framework emphasis on stakeholder collaboration and communication, they aimed to identify how stakeholders understood and engaged with the Framework and their priorities for a future AHW strategy. Five focus groups were conducted with 26 key partners and stakeholders. They each followed the same topic guide (Annex D), which captured the research objectives and themes emerging from the document analysis and interview analysis. The focus groups were also dynamic and flexible, resulting in new themes emerging and evolving during the engagement.

The first focus group with Framework Group (FG) members was limited to 8 participants, to facilitate possible engagement from current and ex-FG members. FG members' information provided by the Welsh Government was used to identify (purposive sampling) and invite members to identify a mutually convenient time for the focus group. The composition of the 4 other stakeholder focus groups, as outlined in the tender, involved a mixture of farmers, vets, industry professionals, NGOs interested in kept animal welfare and other kept animal owners, workers and interest groups. These focus groups were capped at 6 participants to ensure there was space for all to engage in in-depth discussions on the issues outlined in the topic guide. Stakeholder participants were identified through established research team contacts, suggestions from the Welsh Government (purposive sampling) and by asking interview and focus group participants to identify key stakeholders who best represent these groups (snowball sampling). An additional focus group for those who preferred to participate in Welsh was scheduled, but this was not required by participants.

Potential participants were asked to read the information sheet, Welsh Government Privacy Notice and the voluntary participation form (all of which were available in English and Welsh) and to choose from the proposed focus group sessions. There were between 3 and 9 online (Teams) sessions available to participants to choose from. Those interested in engaging were directed to complete the e-voluntary participation form. The 5 most in-demand sessions were scheduled with participants, those unable to attend were invited to complete the online questionnaire. Where gaps in representation of the key stakeholder groups were identified, stakeholders who were unable to engage were asked to suggest an appropriate colleague or alternative participants who could represent their sector. With the participants' permission, the focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim into NVivo for thematic analysis, as detailed in Section 2.1. The focus groups ranged between 100 and 120 minutes in length.

A sixth focus group was intended for companion animal owner stakeholders, to understand the level of public engagement in the Framework and their views on a future strategy. Despite being rescheduled multiple times, this focus group did not take place due to insufficient engagement. Convenience and snowballing sampling was used to identify public participants who met the research criteria (resident in Wales, aged over 18 years, a current or recent companion animal owner). Importantly, this sampling approach did not intend to recruit a representative sample of the population, as this was not feasible with project resources. Recruitment involved advertising an invite to the focus groups on various social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter/X, Bluesky, Instagram, TikTok and LinkedIn) targeting different population demographics and regions across Wales (e.g. semi-rural and urban). The RSPCA Cymru, Greenpeace Cardiff and focus group contacts also agreed to act as gatekeepers and separately advertised the focus groups on their platforms for members of the public (see Research Limitations in Section 2.7).

Participants were informed their data would be confidential ^[footnote 12]. To enhance confidentiality, participants are identified in the findings by F and a number (e.g. F1).

2.6 Online questionnaire

The online questionnaire addressed all 3 research objectives and related questions (Section 2.1). This was designed for Welsh Government employees and key partners and stakeholders who were unable to participate in the interviews and focus groups. The accessibility of online questionnaires allows participants to engage at a time that suits them and are less time-consuming than engaging in an interview or focus group. Survey participants are easily anonymised, which can reassure them when detailing their experiences and opinions.

As the questionnaire was intended to offer additional flexibility to those who could not engage in the other data collection processes, the study expected to capture only a small number of stakeholders (approximately 20). Given the number of stakeholders who were unable to engage with the focus groups, the 8 respondents who completed the questionnaire was lower than expected. These limitations are discussed further in Section 2.7.

The link to the online questionnaire (available in English and Welsh) was shared with those unable to engage otherwise in the research. Participants were also recruited through snowball sampling, whereby focus group participants were asked to share the link with key stakeholders they engaged with (e.g. members, sector partners and clients). The questionnaire (with information sheet and Privacy Notice) was hosted on Jisc Online Surveys for a period of 7 weeks, between February and March 2025. It comprised 35 mainly

Footnotes

[12] This means that participants are advised they are free to use the information discussed, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speakers, nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

open-ended questions collecting qualitative data as well as a few closed/agreement scale questions (Annex E).

The responses to the open-ended questions were analysed thematically (see Interviews above). Although the small number of respondents did not make quantitative data analysis practical, the few closed-question responses were tallied and these numbers are presented in the findings for transparency. Importantly, this method and sampling approach did not intend to recruit a representative sample of the population, as this was not possible within project resources. The numerical questionnaire results represent a very small number of stakeholders. To emphasise the limited quantitative relevance of these responses, the number of overall responses to each question is included for each. Qualitative responses have been analysed alongside that of other participants and should not be considered as a discrete data set.

Two respondents identified as being a Welsh Government staff member and one as an existing or prior member of the FG. The latter respondent as well as 5 others described themselves as either in partnership with the Welsh Government or as a stakeholder in AHW in Wales. These respondents were members of industry stakeholder networks or sector-specific advisory groups, most often in the field of farm animal health. Respondents' identities were anonymised at the point of submission and are identified in the findings by S and a number (e.g. S1). As is common in survey research, some respondents did not answer every question. Consequently, the number of respondents referenced in the analysis is fewer than 8 in some cases. It is also important to note that for multiple-response questions, the total number of responses may exceed the number of respondents who answered the question.

Overall, the multi-method approach captured a range of views from 40 participants ^[footnote 13] with representation from many parts of the AHW sector, apart from companion animal owners and enforcement stakeholders as now discussed.

Footnotes

[13] Due to questionnaire anonymity, it is not possible to check interview and focus group participants did not also complete the questionnaire. However, instructions were provided to participants who engaged in the interviews and focus groups not to complete the questionnaire and the link was provided to gatekeepers for those who did not engage otherwise in the research.

Table 2 Summary of coding system used to identify participants

Method	Code part A	Code part B	Example
Interview	INT	a unique number which corresponds to each interviewee	INT1
Focus group	F	a unique number which corresponds to each participant	F1
Questionnaire	S	a unique number which corresponds to each participant	S1
Document	D	the type of document and the date if relevant	D: FG Meeting Minutes June 2015

Source: authors' own summary.

Description of Table 2: the table outlines the coding system used in the Findings to identify research participants according to their type of engagement in the project and a unique number which is used to enhance anonymity for participants. The final column provides examples of these codes.

2.7 Research limitations

Research limitations on sample size and selection should be noted as these impact the reliability and validity of the data collected. Scoping reviews are used to identify the limitations in existing literature. As the review identified only 4 'news' sources from the same peer reviewed journal this indicates there has been inadequate engagement within the scholarly literature to help evaluate the Framework.

Sample size and selection was also a limitation in the empirical data collection. Email correspondence in response to the invitation to engage in the research demonstrated there was interest from Welsh Government employees and stakeholders. However, engagement was lower than expected, as detailed in Table 1. Feedback from stakeholders through emails to the project manager indicated non-engagement was largely due to time-pressures during the data collection period (December 2024 to March 2025). The option to complete the online questionnaire was intended to capture those experiencing time and resource pressures. The questionnaire link was sent to 50 potential respondents, many of whom represented or were gatekeepers to a wider range of stakeholders. The additional potential respondents to whom it was then forwarded or 'snowballed' is unknown and so the response rate cannot be measured.

While the study represents a variety of kept animal sectors and the sample achieved consisted of participants who best represented or have knowledge of WAHW, it is not representative of all Framework stakeholders. Due to project time and resource limitations and the vast number of sectors and stakeholders under the Framework, it was not possible

to ensure effective saturation of the sector population. Notable population gaps included small businesses, hobby animal owners, the public companion animal owners, those responsible for kept animals in more nuanced sectors and impacted wildlife and enforcement stakeholders.

Stakeholder participants were initially identified through the Welsh Government, FG and researcher contacts. While the researchers reached out to a wide range of established stakeholder networks and gatekeepers, there may be bias in those identified and self-selection bias among those who engaged. Many stakeholders may not be active in these established arenas and thereby are not represented in the sample. Likewise, self-selection bias may mean the qualities of stakeholders choosing to engage in the research are different to those who were unable or disinterested. As discussed below (Section 3), financial and staffing pressures and prior engagement with the Framework are likely to have influenced stakeholders' engagement. The project did not engage with all relevant stakeholders, such as the local authorities or the police, as stakeholders in the kept animal categories defined within the tender ^[footnote14] were prioritised. Accordingly, the findings are not representative of all Framework stakeholders.

Six attempts were made to schedule the companion animal owner focus group. The many 'likes' on the social media posts by members of the public did not convert to participants and those who contacted the researchers were unable to participate at a mutually convenient time (see Annex F for social media sites). Anecdotal feedback from gatekeepers suggested the public may not feel 'qualified' to participate due to their limited engagement and understanding of the Framework ^[footnote 15]. Companion animal owners were not given the option to engage with the online questionnaire due to project resources.

2.8 Data reporting

It is important to note, extracts from the data have been minimalised in the following Findings section to enhance report readability and brevity. To enhance clarity in the interpretation of participant responses, qualitative descriptors such as 'few', 'several' and 'many' are used in a proportionate and standardised manner. These terms correspond to approximate number of participants, as outlined in Table 3 below. In reporting questionnaire responses, exact numbers are provided (e.g. no=5).

Footnotes

[14] The categories outlined in the tender, included farmers, vets, companion animal owners and industry professionals, other kept animal owners and workers.

[15] Consideration was given at the point of design to the language used to recruit participants. The language used was informal, aimed at the level of the public, inviting them to engage as companion animal owners who were interested in AHW. A link was also provided to the Framework document to support understanding of the scope and purpose of the Framework.

Table 3: Terms used in the findings to indicate approximately how many participants commented on a topic

Descriptor	Approximate Proportion
Few	Small minority
Some	Noticeable minority
Several	Moderate proportion
Many	Large proportion
Most	Clear majority
Nearly all	Vast majority
All	Entire sample

Source: authors' own summary.

Description of Table 3: the table outlines the terms used in the Findings to describe the proportion of participants who provided comments on the issue being discussed, ranging from few (a small minority) to all participants (entire sample).

3. Findings

The research findings are presented here in sections aligned to the 3 research objectives:

1. to evaluate the [Animal Health and Welfare \(AHW\) Framework \(2014 to 2024\)](#) (Framework)
2. to assess the extent to which Welsh Government priorities in relation to animal health and welfare are already covered or under development, in their other plans, schemes and strategies
3. to make recommendations for the future Wales AHW Strategy, including its structure, content and duration

The first section evaluates the existing Framework; the second provides a brief overview of developments in AHW policy and plans; and the third considers the future Strategy. In adopting this approach, there is some necessary overlap between sections, reflecting the reoccurring themes which have emerged in the analysis. The findings reflect the perceptions and experiences of key Framework stakeholders and the analysis of the main documents supporting Framework implementation. In this way, comments on Framework effectiveness and limitations are judgements made by stakeholders or noted in documents, rather than the results of an impact evaluation. As detailed in Table 2, the following coding system is provided to identify the data sources used to evidence the findings: [INT] (interviews), [F] (focus groups), [S] (questionnaire) and [D] (documents).

3.1. Framework evaluation

Research objective 1 involved evaluating the current AHW Framework. The literature review is first presented, followed by themed findings, predominantly informed by the empirical data collected. The results of the document analysis are interwoven in parts to compare Framework intentions and outcomes ^[footnote 16].

3.1.1. Scoping review

The scoping literature review highlighted there has been little coverage of the Framework within scholarly literature. Four articles have been published since 2014 in the 'News & Reports' section of the Veterinary Record journal (British Veterinary Association (BVA) 2014a, 2014b, 2016, 2017). These articles provided background information and a conduit for stakeholder communication, rather than an evaluation of the Framework.

Footnotes

[16] As noted in the methodology section, the source of the findings can be identified herein by the following identifiers: interviews (INT); focus group (F); survey (S) and documents (D).

The first articles set out the origin and focus of the Framework. For example, by noting the involvement of the Welsh Minister for Natural Resources and Food and the Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries in the Framework launch, they demonstrated the Welsh Government's commitment to the Framework ([BVA 2014a](#), [2014b](#)). The articles note the development of an expert panel (Framework Group (FG)) to advise the Welsh Government and support the Framework and the creation of priority area subgroups (e.g. Bovine Viral Diarrhoea) ([BVA 2014b](#), [2016](#), BVA 1017). Further stakeholder and partnership engagement was evidenced in one article (BVA [2014a](#)) which extended the Welsh Government's invitation to stakeholders to engage in 4 workshops to inform the development of the Framework. Another (BVA [2014b](#)) noted the development of a young person's guide to the Framework and detailed how stakeholders could engage with the registration database.

Later articles emphasised the aim of ensuring strong partnerships are embedded in the Framework. Both the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) for Wales and Framework Group Chair were reported to emphasise the need for partnership work considering the announced UK exit from the EU ([BVA 2016](#)).

3.1.2. Framework priorities and principles

All participants were invited to reflect on the relevance of the Framework, in particular current priorities and guiding principles. It was clear from several focus group participants that stakeholders confused the Framework with the Implementation Plans (IP), as they repeatedly referred to the latter when asked about the Framework (see Section 3.1.6). When the principles and outcomes were clarified, the broad purpose of the Framework was generally well understood by participants. As explained by a questionnaire respondent, the intention of the Framework is: "to create a unified national and local approach to improve the standards of the health and welfare of animals kept across Wales" [S7].

The Framework was praised by many participants for contributing meaningfully to progressing AHW issues in Wales. More generally, there was agreement across participant groups that the Framework's principles and outcomes remain relevant and that they continue to offer a robust foundation for AHW work. For example, an interviewee highlighted the following principles and outcomes: "The idea of working collaboratively, working on common goals and common themes, giving a set of priorities and delivery plan is all very sensible and has worked really well to date" [INT1].

Many participants viewed the Framework as a valuable reference tool for understanding the shared principles that underpin the approach to AHW in Wales. The Framework provided, for example, a "policy and strategic lead for activity across Wales" [S3] and helped to "progress the industry and put best practice into place" [S4]. It also clarified expectations which can be used to hold the Welsh Government to account, as an FG member explained:

"I feel that if the Framework has merit...then anything that comes forward from government either as an initiative, a financial initiative or whether it's a disease challenge, we should look at that against those principles. And if the government signs

up to those principles, then it gives us as the Framework Group something to hold them to, to say, well we want to move this way forward and this is what you have agreed to as a principle” [F2].

An interviewee further reflected the Framework serves not only organisational goals but also individual needs for clarity, defensibility and efficiency in decision-making. That is, within Welsh Government departments, civil servants can point to the Framework to clarify their remit and priorities. It also ensures that resource allocation remains aligned with AHW priorities, as another interviewee explained: “within [the] Welsh Government, we can’t draw down resource without some sort of plan to say why that resource is needed to fulfil a ministerial priority or plan of work” [INT6]. Thereby, it serves as an internal mechanism for securing resources for AHW, which is important for delivering a long-term Framework.

All interviewees stressed that the Framework’s strength also lay in its ability to unify stakeholders through collaboration and in fostering alignment across diverse sectors and agendas, including those from industry and within the Welsh Government. As one interviewee explained, it provides an agenda “we can all work towards. It helps us all pull in the same direction...we’ve got some basic principles and some basic goals and I think that is needed” [INT6]. Further discussion on the value of partnership work is discussed in Section 3.1.2.2.

3.1.2.1. Benefits of a long-term consistent vision

The document analysis (e.g. FG minutes June 2016, March 2023) notes political support for the Framework through the annual FG chair meeting with the minister responsible for AHW. Many interviewees noted the 10-year timeframe was important for ensuring government commitment to AHW by providing a consistent and stable vision for AHW throughout political changes, as captured in this quote:

“The whole point of having the Framework [is]...This is what you said you agreed we [civil servants] could do in the next five, ten years, whatever. And the reason it’s over ten years is because it straddles a policy term, you know, the government’s terms... five years isn’t long enough really” [INT3].

In this way, several interviewees highlighted the political relevance of the Framework, while also praising its apolitical and neutral tone and long-term applicability. The stability of a 10-year vision was also noted by some participants as fostering continuity across policy areas that sit within the Framework. Likewise, a few participants commented the Framework length helped shape external perceptions of AHW as it articulated Wales’ long-term commitment.

3.1.2.2. Benefits of partnership working

Many participants reported that the Framework’s principles had been effectively operationalised in certain contexts. The values of partnership, shared responsibility and evidence-based decision making were referenced as central to the Welsh Government’s

approach. Listening and acting on stakeholder input was seen as a strength rather than a procedural burden as indicated by the following participant: “I think that willingness to listen and enact, to take action based on the evidence that’s presented, I think works really well” [F18]. For a few participants, partnership working was perceived to be embraced beyond rhetoric to shared duties and costs (e.g. Bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD), Bovine Tuberculosis (TB)): “We absolutely take the partnership working and cost and responsibility sharing [seriously]” [INT6].

The principle of partnership work was further evidenced in the document analysis where FG meeting minutes identified: “it was encouraging that the [\[Strategic Framework for Welsh Agriculture\]](#) approach being adopted mirrors that taken in developing the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework”. This referred to a broader commitment to working in partnership but also showed collaboration across government departments and bodies. The partnership work between the Framework Group [FG] and stakeholders more broadly was evidenced by the extensive networking and engagements noted in the minutes by FG members, who were “now facilitating and influencing work priorities” [D: FG meeting minutes June 2015].

3.1.2.3. Framework impact

The Framework principles were credited by many participants with enabling progress in areas such as disease eradication and antimicrobial resistance. For example, one survey respondent explained: “The Framework outcomes allowed us, over the years, to develop a One health way of working and collaborative approach to disease control and management” (e.g. BVD control plan) [S8]. Another participant described how the Framework principles and resourcing contributed to Wales being “ahead of all the other countries in the UK and most of the other countries” [INT6] in delivering AWH work. This view was supported by focus group participants, with one explaining: the importance of devolution in positioning Wales as a leader in this space: “I think Wales sometimes is the envy of some of the other devolved countries because we’ve got quite a few projects...with government support to make these projects work” [F3].

Questionnaire respondents were asked to what degree Framework and [Implementation Plans](#) [IP] aims were met. Most respondents agreed with the statements:

- ‘the AHW Implementation Plan 2022 to 2024 captures what I consider to be the current key AHW priorities in Wales’. (n =4/7)
- ‘the Framework had been effective in ensuring that animals are healthy’ (n=6/7 agree), ‘have a good quality of life’ (n=5/7 agree) and ‘are productive’ (n=4/7 agree).
- ‘the Framework was successful in facilitating partnership work (5 agreed, 1 strongly agreed out of 7), clarifying stakeholder roles in AHW (n=5/7 agree) and delivering a ‘One Health, One Welfare’ approach (4 agreed, 1 strongly agreed out of 7).

These views were consistent with those of many interview and focus group participants. For example, one participant noted: “I think it’s worth mentioning what I think is already in the strategy that works, in terms of that focus on ‘One Health, One Welfare’, the preventative aspect, focusing on outcomes. I think that’s all great” [F18]. These outcomes align with the

new (at the time) results-based accountability approach adopted by the Framework, which an interviewee identified as: the focus being on outcomes-based strategies, evidence, working in partnership” [INT4]. The positive Framework impacts identified by many participants are notable considering the adverse economic context into which it emerged. For example, the same interviewee highlighted the limited resources available influenced the approach taken in developing the Framework: “I think the other driver for us [Welsh Government] was the budget. As per usual, there was no new money for animal health and welfare in Wales at that time and you had to really make a case for your funding as well”.

While all participants agreed the Framework has been impactful, many noted it was difficult to measure the scale of this impact and to detail the tangible benefits. Importantly, the noted benefits in the farm health sector were easier for participants to identify than other areas of AHW. This was also true in the document analysis where the FG minutes consistently reported progress in addressing animal diseases (e.g. BVD, sheep scab, TB), antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and biosecurity.

The positive impacts identified by participants were, thereby, not believed to be consistent across the AHW sectors, but predominantly focused on animal health and farm animals. This focus is consistent with the tone of the Framework (e.g. ‘productive animals’, ‘food production and public health’) (see Figure 1). The emphasis on farm animals was also evident in the IPs. For example, the 2015 to 16 Plan noted the FG identified biosecurity/health planning, responsible use of veterinary medicines, BVD and Sheep Scab as fundamental priorities for this period [D: FG meeting minutes June 2015]. Engagement with the welfare sector (e.g. equine and companion animals) was also listed; however, this was the only non-farm focus. Although participants clearly indicated this imbalance had not yet been fully addressed (see section 3.1.2.5), there is evidence in more recent FG meeting minutes and subsequent IPs that Framework priorities have evolved, becoming more inclusive of other sectors and species.

3.1.2.4. Challenges in delivering on principles and priorities

Despite the Framework’s acknowledged strengths many participants felt that its delivery had not always lived up to its initial promise. In particular, the broader societal and environmental principles and outcomes were less likely to be discussed by participants when asked to identify the impact of the Framework. This is also reflected in questionnaire responses which indicated less confidence among some participants in the Framework:

- supporting ‘a thriving rural economy’ (2 agreed, 1 strongly agreed out of 7)
- ‘maintaining a high-quality (wider natural) environment’ (1/7 agree)
- ‘delivering and enforcing standards in AHW’ (3/7 agree)
- ‘enhancing public confidence in the way food is produced’ (1 agreed, 1 strongly agreed out of 7)

- ‘providing a better understanding of the costs and benefits of AHW interventions’ (2/7 agree)

These findings may reflect the economic challenges that exacerbated the ‘climate of pressurised resources’ into which the [Framework](#) (2014, page 13) was launched. This climate has shaped governance of the Framework and stakeholder engagement, resulting in tough decisions being made on what to prioritise to achieve the greatest impact. This is evident in FG meeting minutes and IPs, as one interviewee noted: “I think we have to be mindful of resource...in that they [FG] can’t do everything” [INT4].

The [Animal Welfare Plan for Wales 2021 to 26](#) (AWPW) highlighted 2 further significant challenges in Framework delivery - the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the UK exit from the EU. As the Framework was developed in line with EU policy obligations, the UK exit from the EU has resulted in a long and uncertain period of policy changes to AHW. Many participants noted COVID-19 disrupted previously effective mechanisms for Framework engagement and delivery. One participant reflected on this shift, remarking: “Sadly, I think some of that nice rhythm of filtering down and filtering up has been lost as a result of COVID” [F6]. Others noted the backlog in responses to consultations: “Then we went into COVID. Then it was ‘Oh well we’ll wait for Defra to do it’. Well of course Defra hasn’t done it” [F8]. In response to this backlog and the resources available to Framework partners, there were challenges in retaining partner focus on AHW (see also Section 3.1.4).

In addition to recognising the disruptive impact of external factors, participants described a range of other challenges which impacted the delivery of the Framework principles and priorities. These included limited focus on enforcement and the lack of a robust evidence base in implementing the Framework and limited evidence of tangible Framework outcomes. Participants also highlighted declining momentum, weak accountability mechanisms, uneven sectoral engagement, the limited visibility and political influence of the AWHF and the need for greater resilience. These limitations are discussed further in the sections that follow.

3.1.2.4.1 Limited enforcement and robust Framework monitoring

The limited achievements in ‘enforcing standards’ was of particular concern to several participants, as emphasised by one interviewee:

“I think the fifth one [Framework principle] is to have an effective enforcement of regulations. In my view, I think that has got a lot worse over ten years. It’s stood there as a Framework principle, but it hasn’t achieved what it was set out to achieve, which was to maintain that capability” [INT6].

Likewise, a recurring limitation for many participants, including questionnaire respondents (3 disagreed and 2 were neutral when asked if the Framework developed a robust monitoring and evaluation framework), was Framework monitoring and evaluation. This was expressed as frustration around the lack of tangible and clear measurable outputs. For some this frustration was considerable: “If you asked me to name one thing that we’ve achieved in the last ten years, I probably couldn’t.” [INT3]. Several participants linked this to the difficulty of

anchoring the Framework in evidence-based practice, noting that the early emphasis on data and analysis had not been sustained:

“The strategy, it does say that they [FG] will have a strong evidence base. What does that mean? What is the evidence base? How is it recorded?...Without doing any of that, it’s just government having a conversation with itself and then telling everybody what it decided...” [F15].

Other participants linked this to the absence of clear measurable goals and limited accountability mechanisms in the Framework. As one explained: “It would be good to have just a bit more in there [Framework] of how the Government will be held to account and a little bit more detail on how they’re going to deliver it” [F21]. This is consistent with participants’ views (see Section 3.1.2.3) that although the Framework has been impactful, measuring the effectiveness of the Framework’s overarching goals and principles was challenging. This was echoed in several reflections, including the FG participants, who stated: “...actually what have we achieved and if you look at the strategic outcomes, well they’re very vague and woolly and waffly, so actually how would you say compared to 2014 how have we achieved those” [F4].

3.1.2.4.2 Limited momentum and resilience

The broad remit of the Framework and developments in the governance team, for some participants, resulted in a lack of momentum in Framework delivery. Frustration was expressed about the perceived stagnation of priority-setting processes, with some participants calling for more decisive action. For example, one participant explained: “We seem to be in this endless cycle of sticking post-its on a board for the priorities and there was a desire to say, let’s just crack on with it” [F6]. Linked to this, some participants questioned the Framework’s visibility and resilience in the face of shifting political priorities. There was concern that its profile was now too low to ensure its continuity or relevance over time, as explained here: “I don’t think it’s loud enough for them [Welsh Government Ministers] to care whether it’s there or not” [INT3].

While many participants commented that the 10-year cycle was effective (see Section 3.1.2.1), given the ambitious aims of the Framework others argued the lack of momentum may indicate this period is too long. Some participants pointed to the need for greater adaptability. The Framework’s value was seen to diminish when strategic detail became too fixed, particularly in the face of events such as the UK’s exit from the EU and disease outbreaks, as one participant explained: “If you’ve got a very detailed Strategy, particularly that’s in place for such a long period, very quickly a Strategy’s going to become obsolete...and I think that’s what’s probably happened with our Strategy” [INT5].

3.1.2.4.3 Imbalance in Framework sector priorities

Uneven sectoral engagement was noted in Section 3.1.2.3. The progress in preventing diseases and enhancing health in “agriculture and farmed” animals (see Section 3.1.2.3), was not evident to most participants in relation to animal welfare and non-farm animal

sectors [INT2]. Several interview and focus group participants highlighted the limited focus on companion animals' welfare, including exotic pets and responsible dog ownership. They argued the focus given in the Framework was not consistent with the population of animals or public interest in these issues. While 2 questionnaire respondents also felt there was a greater focus on health than welfare, 5 participants indicated the focus was balanced. The qualitative data offered richer insight ^[footnote17] into sector-specific concerns and highlighted areas of perceived neglect that were not as visible in the survey responses, especially given the limitations of the small survey sample size (see Section 2.7).

3.1.3. Framework governance

All participants were asked to reflect on the mechanisms which supported Framework delivery. In line with the Framework document, several mechanisms were discussed and identified by participants as important, such as the governance structure; partnership networks; databases; and the communication strategy (including the annual Implementation Plan [IP]). Participants reflected on the roles and responsibilities of the FG and Framework Monitoring Team and how influence is exercised across the Framework within the governance structure, which are considered here. Their role in collaboration and stakeholder engagement and communication are further explored in the following section.

3.1.3.1. Framework Group

In line with the FG's Terms of Reference (ToR) (see Section 1.2), document analysis and participant responses evidence that the engagements and activities undertaken to cover this remit have been extensive. As one member explained: "Our remit is massive, so everything [in AHW] is relevant" [F1]. The breadth and complexity of the work was confirmed by FG members in the focus group and acknowledged by some other participants. It is also evidenced in the FG meeting minutes which detail activities ranging from meeting the Minister and participating in high-level Boards (e.g. CHAWG, SHAWG, DEFRA four Chairs meeting, EU Roundtable Working Groups) to attending industry meetings (e.g. Food and Drink Industry Board) and key events (e.g. Royal Welsh Show, Spring Fair, AHLVA Conference). FG meetings included engaging with various partners and stakeholders on a wide range of AHW issues (e.g. Menter a Busnes, Chair of the BDV Subgroup, Food Policy Team, Chair of Animal Health and Welfare Board England, Head of Exotics and Contingency Planning (Welsh Government) and Head of Rural Development Division (Welsh Government). Members also detailed responding to requests for feedback and guidance on a variety of specialist subjects, including policy developments and funding allocation.

Footnotes

[17] Surveys often capture surface-level or generalised views, whereas interviews and focus groups allow participants to elaborate on their perspectives and clarify meaning.

Some of these activities are part of their external roles, which facilitate the link between the Framework and industry stakeholders. However, FG members highlighted the time available to engage in these activities (in line with the remuneration received) was not consistent with the expanding workload. The reference to “expanding” may be linked to the broad remit of the Framework in terms of species and sectors and the need to respond to significant and urgent changes in the sector. It is evident in the FG minutes that where there were positive outcomes in responding to an issue (e.g. TB), the group were keen to maintain that momentum, but this conflicted with the need to respond to other sectors and developments (e.g. livestock worrying, companion animal welfare, Bluetongue virus (BTV)).

A few participants commented that from its inception the FG was marked by enthusiasm and a keen sense of purpose. It was envisaged as a “high-profile”, “seen” and proactive body central to the new Framework’s delivery [F4]. A consistent theme was the value attributed to the FG’s independent and expert composition. This independence was viewed as central to its credibility and effectiveness as an intermediary between government and wider stakeholders. As one participant explained:

“the [Wales Chief Veterinary Officer] at the time, wanted something that was quite small but with expert independence and that was really crucial, independent experts with objective views who could basically provide advice, provide a view but it was an objective view and basically get from talking to doing as quickly as possible and I think that was the key” [INT4].

Most questionnaire respondents agreed the FG had effectively performed their role as stipulated by their ToR and the [IP 2022 to 2024](#) [n=4/7] and supported Framework implementation [n=5/7]. One respondent explained their value in being “... able to offer independent industry advice as policies are developed and animal health and welfare goals are moved on” [S2]. This policy advisory function was described by other participants as a “critical friend” [F5] and “sounding board” [F4] and “supporting the delivery, the implementation and the policy development around the Framework” [INT5]. This was seen to provide the dual function of challenge and validation. As one interviewee explained: “They [FG] hold people like me to account... They will challenge me [pause] it’s a mixture of challenge and support” [INT6].

FG members perceived their role to be enhancing OCVO’s influence within policy processes, particularly when recommendations aligned with OCVO’s aims. They highlighted, for example, the benefits of their role in advising on the [Sustainable Farming Scheme](#) (SFS), suggesting their feedback provided OCVO with a stronger position for embedding AHW in the Scheme [F4]. Another member argued that had their advice been sought earlier it “...could have avoided a lot of the political pitfalls” that they perceived to have arisen in this Scheme.

The current FG was perceived by interviewees and some stakeholder participants to facilitate dialogue and make collective decisions, as well as enabling, at times, an effective feedback loop between civil servants, ministers and beyond. Their role as a conduit for stakeholder communication and engagement, including relaying messages more credibly than government actors, for example to farmers, was praised by several interviewees. In

this way a few participants viewed the FG as moving away from the more rigid steering group and top-down management models to, collaborative locally driven decision-making. The Pembrokeshire approach to statutory disease management (TB), sponsored by the Framework, was noted by one interviewee as an example of a successful consensus-based model of governance. Further information on this approach is available in the [Wales TB Eradication Programme Delivery Plan 2023 to 2028](#).

Most participants highlighted the value of established local networks, industry organisations and advisory groups in extending the FG's reach. FG minutes and the [IP 2022 to 2024 \(page 6\)](#) evidenced the exchange of information, data or feedback on a variety of AHW issues and FG engagement with groups such as Farming Connect, farming unions, Ruminant Health and Welfare Group, British Veterinary Association, Animal Welfare Network Wales [AWNw] and Companion Animal Welfare Group Wales [CAwGW]. These groups were seen as vital for accessing broader grassroots expertise and ensuring that the FG's work was informed by those with direct experience; something the FG's composition alone could not always achieve. One participant reflected: "Groups like AWnw are the 'people on the ground'...the Framework Panel didn't have [pause] the expertise they had was very good, but they didn't have a big group of people to write to and say, 'Can you give us your views?'" [F6].

Overall, participant responses and document insights show that the FG has in many ways fulfilled its intended purpose as outlined in the ToR. However, some participants made a distinction on the effectiveness of the FG pre- and post- COVID-19, with the former viewed as more effective. Other participants argued ambiguity in the ToR and Framework scope left their role open to interpretation, making it difficult to evaluate their effectiveness. These limitations will be discussed further in Section 3.1.3.3.

3.1.3.2. The Monitoring Team

The Monitoring Team, which includes secretariat functions located within the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer (OCVO), was widely regarded by participants as enhancing Framework coordination, responsiveness and strategic continuity. Most questionnaire participants, for example, valued the role of the Monitoring Team in addressing AHW priorities (n = 5/7) ^[footnote18]. Other participants viewed the dual function of the secretariat in supporting the FG and overseeing the Framework and AHW developments within OCVO as a strength.

The secretariat's contribution to policy dialogue and intergovernmental communication was highly valued by some participants. One focus group participant explained they found the Monitoring Team "very adept at directly [directing] questions and getting answers either straight to the minister, either to colleagues elsewhere in government or via the panel in

Footnotes

[18] This compared to 3 out of 7 respondents valuing the role of the Framework Group in addressing AHW priorities.

their meetings...” [F6]. The participant went on to say they felt the Monitoring Team “did quite a good job of channelling stuff very well pre-COVID” [F6]. This point underlines a common divide made by many participants, which suggests the Framework and its implementation was better prior to COVID-19, due to the various disruptions experienced during the pandemic and thereafter (see also Section 3.1.2.4). An interviewee explained the impact on the Monitoring Team as “like a terrible storm of lots of different things that have all happened at the same time in a way... I think they’ve done a really good job just to keep it going” [INT4]. Consequently, participants highlighted several governance challenges and areas for improvement, discussed in the following section.

3.1.3.3. Challenges in Framework governance and areas for improvement

Participants identified several areas where Framework governance could be enhanced. These included addressing practical and structural constraints such as resource limitations, clarifying the FG remit and the weak feedback loop, as discussed in the following sections.

A few interviewees suggested both internal and external factors had affected the capacity of the Monitoring Team, which in turn affected the delivery of the Framework’s objectives. While the Framework’s launch generated considerable enthusiasm, that initial momentum was not always matched by structural support or a sustained clarity of purpose, according to some participants. For example, the Framework (2014, page 14) sets out the role of the Monitoring Team as: “maintaining the central record of the data development agenda and coordinating the communications strategy”. However, few Welsh Government and FG participants discussed the use of the stakeholder database or data evidence cards. They were intended to support the Framework data and communication agenda (see Section 1.3). Many stakeholder participants did not know they existed or suggested they were not used to enhance stakeholder inclusivity and engagement (see Section 3.1.4.4). Consequently, some participants argued the communication strategy did not reach across the Framework’s diverse audience and some stakeholders wanted greater engagement.

Both FG members and other focus group participants indicated ambiguity in the FG role, expectations and the routes through which influence is exercised. Despite formal guidance outlined in the ToR and other Framework documents, the FG desired further clarity on their role (D: unpublished FG document Jan 2025). FG participants noted that their remit appears to have expanded, despite limited resources (renumeration for 20 days a year) to fulfil this role. While FG participants expressed a keen interest in addressing new and emerging AHW issues and expanding their influence to deliver the Framework, they recognised this was not compatible with the resources available to do so.

The FG ToR did not provide the transparency desired by several participants. This included clarity on the relationship between the FG and Monitoring Team. As one participant queried: “Does the animal health and welfare group actually advise OCVO or does OCVO say to them, ‘We want you to work on this?’” [F16]. This uncertainty was reiterated by a FG participant, who highlighted the ambiguity (“You don’t really know what they [OCVO] expect”) and argued clearer roles and direction were wanted from OCVO.

Many participants wanted more evidence of the FG's influence in driving the Framework. Their queries were linked to the absence of a feedback loop which communicated the FG's value and authority. The importance of a feedback loop was also explained by one FG member:

“if Welsh Government or maybe OCVO specifically think that we're an important conduit in that critical friend piece...we don't get that feedback to say, 'You know what? That PP [consultation response] you put forward for SFS [the Sustainable Farmers Scheme]...you've made a difference there'...not off the record, but in the meeting tell us it was really influential” [F5].

The question of influence was also raised by stakeholder participants, with one arguing other sector groups provided “better linked support” [F24] to the Welsh Government. A key indicator of the FG's influence, for many participants, was direct engagement with Ministers. Nearly all FG members highlighted the value of their former annual face-to-face meeting with the Minister, which had since lapsed:

“well we've got a Deputy First Minister now who's also our Rural Affairs Minister and his portfolio is massive, so it's fitting the time in really. F5 [focus group participant] mentioned the round table earlier on and he's involved with that as well, but there's always an excuse. I haven't met, [pause] I think it was two years now I met... [the former Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs] last, so it's not good enough really” [F1].

These examples underscore broader concerns from many participants about the FG's visibility and communication. Until 2023 the FG's meeting minutes were published on the Welsh Government website. While many participants were unaware of their availability, for some others the absence of meeting minutes raised concerns around FG transparency and a loss of momentum. For one interviewee they felt a sense of fatigue (e.g. limited attention to the Framework outside of meetings) and reduced strategic engagement in meetings from the FG, leading them to suggest the FG had:

“come to the end of that road and I think they need a new injection. They need some kind of [pause] a catalyst to get them back into what they do and why” [INT2].

Despite continuity challenges, the rotating membership of the FG (see [AWPW Progress Report Year 1, page 4](#)) was viewed by some participants as an opportunity for injecting new ideas and broadening representation. FG size and membership was repeatedly commented on by participants who wished for broader representation of the Framework sectors. Ambiguity on how well the FG represented Framework sectors and the necessary skillset was clear among questionnaire respondents ^[footnote19]. This was also echoed by many other

Footnotes

participants. The companion animal sector, specifically the fish and reptile sectors, were mentioned as not being represented [S5]. These comments reflected the previously noted imbalance in representation and agenda-setting, with certain farmed animal issues seen to dominate the Framework agenda.

For some participants who had engaged with the FG, the discussions themselves were seen to be too operational or narrowly focused on issues such as disease eradication (e.g. TB reactors). A few participants compared the FG to earlier, larger AHW groups, arguing FG membership and the appointment process reduces engagement and weakens strategic links in some sectors. As explained by one participant: “Now it feels as though decisions are being made...with less emphasis on a wider network approach and wider engagement with stakeholders prior to decisions being made” [F15]. In contrast, others noted the prior challenges (such as focused discussion, delivery and outcomes) of engaging a larger advisory group, suggesting there were also limitations to this approach.

3.1.4 Collaboration and partnership engagement

Working in partnership and understanding and accepting roles and responsibilities is central to the Framework principles. The desire for and benefits of partnership work was evidenced across participant groups. The present section explores how partners and stakeholders have experienced the engagement process and the gaps they have identified.

3.1.4.1. Effective stakeholder engagement and partnership work

The FG’s minutes evidence a broad range of engagements with a variety of partners and stakeholders (see Section 3.1.1.3). The broader engagement between stakeholders, the FG and the Welsh Government, was noted and commended by many participants. One interviewee summarised the current situation as:

“So, it all works. No, the relationships are quite good at the moment. The welfare groups and things like that and the farming unions, we’re in a good place actually. We seem to be working well collectively with different governments, with unions across the UK. It feels like we’re in a decent enough place right now” [INT2].

Comparisons made by participants between Wales and other UK regions suggested that Wales benefited from closer working relationships, likely influenced by its smaller scale. One participant noted: “I would say there’s a really good working relationship and an exchange of information that I don’t necessarily see in England” [F18].

In line with the goal for stakeholder ownership of the Framework, some participants noted the facilitation and development of partnership work between stakeholders. The

[19] When asked, to what extent do you agree with this statement: ‘The AHW Framework Group is made up of the most appropriate members [e.g. providing coverage of sector and skillset]’? of the 7 respondents, 3 respondents disagreed, 2 neither agreed nor disagreed, 1 strongly agreed and 1 selected ‘Don’t know’.

Responsible Dog Ownership stakeholder group supported by the Welsh Government was one example cited:

“...it was quite noticeable the way that the groups were now starting to talk amongst themselves really, not quite sidelining Welsh Government but didn't need Welsh Government to be there the whole time....So, I think stakeholder groups can work and if given the right atmosphere they can very much start to have an entity of their own where government can, not sort of drop out of it, but sit back and listen” [F2].

The evidence suggests for many participants stakeholder engagement is very good and the benefits are reciprocal. Notably, both the documents and participant comments indicate the sectors in which FG members sit (e.g. veterinary, farming) are most likely to be engaged with the Framework.

Some participants emphasised such structured partnerships were facilitated by clear communication channels which helped stakeholders navigate policy integration. Where stakeholders are represented by unions, networks and lobbying bodies, such as the farming and agricultural industry (and less so, companion animals), they are more likely to be represented in partnership work and stakeholder engagements. One participant noted that engagement as part of the [SFS](#) fostered a “policy relationship and a communications relationship”, ensuring alignment through dedicated personnel [INT1]. At the same time, an FG participant cited the SFS as an example where consultation efforts initially fell short of “true working in partnership” [F4]. The FG group did not feel fully integrated into the decision-making processes. The evidence suggests effective collaboration is complex across the vast AHW sectors and stakeholders and is contingent on several factors, which are now discussed.

3.1.4.2. Challenges and maximising engagement

The challenges raised by participants included limited stakeholder resources for engagement; certain sectors not being a priority; the lack of clarity on the opportunities available for collaboration; and the limited capacity of the FG (with 8 members) to represent all AHF sectors. Many participants raised concerns over how meaningful some partnership engagements have been, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, which reportedly disrupted the established momentum and feedback loop praised by many.

In considering inclusivity, many participants noted the problem of overrepresentation and underrepresentation of certain sectors and organisations. Some participants referred to engagement as involving the “same voices” [F9] or the “loudest voices” [F12, F6]. These comments were connected to the resources available within the Welsh Government and among stakeholders. For example, one stakeholder participant noted: “Those engaged most are likely to have the most resources and time to engage and those without tend to miss out – which are actually the ones you want to get in touch with, as most at risk of being impacted and ignorant” [F20]. Another survey participant recognised FG engagement and outreach was “limited by the time and funding available” [S2].

Policy development has demonstrated close collaboration between some Welsh Government departments. However, this internal collaboration between OCVO and other government departments was less apparent to some Welsh Government and stakeholder participants. This included departments and agencies responsible for broader AHW related issues such as agriculture, rural economy, health, education, crime and social inequality. Some participants recognised the absence of Local Authorities and the police in partnership work, arguing the Framework failed on the principle of delivering and enforcing standards effectively. Likewise, a lack of public stakeholder engagement was noted, which participants contrasted with Framework goals (e.g. stakeholder ownership and enhancing public confidence in health and food).

The absence of the companion animal owning public was of particular concern to several participants, considering the recent growth in companion animal ownership. For example, an FG member noted, “there are probably too many companion animal stakeholders to deal with, but they would be very happy to make themselves known if they were given the opportunity to do so” [F3]. Another participant explained “I wouldn't have that same level of engagement [as other AHW sectors] because that just hasn't been historically the case for small animals, companion animals” [F14].

In view of these perceived engagement gaps some participants did not feel the FG was fulfilling its role. One participant cited the FG ToR, noting members “play a key role in strengthening the link between Welsh Government, livestock keepers, other animal owners, the veterinary profession and industry reps” [F14]. They concluded, “Well, I'm afraid that isn't something that they've [FG] achieved or are achieving at the moment” [F14]. The ambivalent responses from questionnaire respondents also supported these concerns. When asked if the Framework had engaged with the most appropriate stakeholders, 4 neither agreed nor disagreed (2 of 7 agreed). When asked if FG engagement was effective, most [n=5/7] neither agreed nor disagreed. This may be explained by a few focus group participants stating they were not aware of the FG. Other participants noted limited or no engagement with the FG. These reflections underscore broader concerns about the FG's visibility, online presence and overall group identity, which are considered in the Communication Section 3.1.6).

The stakeholder database was highlighted in the Framework as a key tool for facilitating stakeholder engagement. Document analysis indicated the stakeholder database was intended to help extend the reach of the Framework [e.g. D: FG minutes June 2014]. This included identifying partners and facilitating effective networks and inviting relevant stakeholders to consider the focus of and actions on, agreed priorities. Although this was to be maintained by the Secretariat, no participants identified it as a conduit for collaboration; rather, many did not know of its existence. One participant explained they responded to the invitation to stakeholders to register their interest in the database but received no response despite their extensive experience in the farming sector. The apparent failure to establish new partnership contacts through the database, may partially explain why the noted imbalance in some AHW priority and sector areas is also evident in partnership engagement. In recognising the strengths and limitations in stakeholder collaboration and

engagement, participants suggested several ways for improving engagement, which are discussed in more detail below in the Future Framework (see Section 3.3).

3.1.5 Framework communication

Communication was consistently highlighted as a critical component in the delivery and effectiveness of the Framework. Participants emphasised the importance of clear, consistent and inclusive communication practices in ensuring that the Framework's aims are understood, supported and implemented across sectors. This section explores how participants have experienced the communication process over time, what has worked well in terms of communication and where gaps remain.

3.1.5.1 Effective communication processes

The importance placed on stakeholder communication and collaboration in the Framework and IPs was echoed amongst some participants. Communication was understood to take place through several channels: the Framework itself, FG engagements with partners, stakeholders and internal Welsh Government departments and the publicised associated FG meeting minutes, the IPs, social media account (X, formerly Twitter) and the Welsh Government website. Framework developments were also communicated through articles in Gwald (the Welsh Government's bi-monthly magazine for those involved in farm, agriculture, forestry and rural affairs) and agricultural shows and events. Some participants experienced effective communication: "In general, I think the communication is quite good" [F12]. Effective communication was identified by participants as clear opportunities for engagement (e.g. with FG and Welsh Government), transparency on key AHW priorities, feeling heard, valued and receiving constructive feedback, identifiable outcomes from engagement and wider networking opportunities.

The publicly available FG meeting minutes showed frequent collaboration between OCVO and the FG and with key stakeholder sectors. FG members evidently guided much of the Framework promotional and engagement work, through attending various industry and stakeholder group meetings and events. The minutes also helped communicate Framework priorities and progress. However, some participants were not aware these minutes were available online, this may be because they have not been published since 2023. These comments may also reflect the accessibility challenges experienced by many participants when using the Welsh Government website (see Section 3.1.5.2).

The Framework was viewed by many as clearly communicating the overarching AHW aims and objectives, as discussed in Section 3.1.2. While opinions varied on how to communicate the detail (e.g. outcomes) more effectively, the need for further clarity was desired by most. While interviewees found the Framework more useful than focus group participants, the latter indicated the IPs better communicated the Framework direction and detail. One participant explained: "I find the Plan more useful than the Framework...[the latter is] probably not that easy for most people in Wales to get their head around or fully understand" [F11]. This may explain the discrepancy in questionnaire responses. While 3

(of 7) respondents agreed overall the Framework's progress has been communicated in an appropriate way, 6 (of 7) strongly agreed that the IPs have been helpful in communicating the focus of the Framework and 4 (of 7) agreed they were helpful in communicating progress.

Document analysis shows the IPs intended to communicate the agreed actions and priorities for implementing the Framework across each period. Participant's comments suggest the IPs have, for many, fulfilled their intention. Several participants spoke about how elements of the IPs and related plans (e.g. WAWP) aligned with their professional roles, emphasising their practical relevance. The plans were particularly valued for addressing regulatory and welfare concerns beyond agriculture, such as improving oversight of animal welfare establishments and pet sales. A few stakeholder participants noted that these aspects were directly applicable to their veterinary work in Wales, including efforts to enhance qualifications for local authority inspectors.

Overall, many participants recognised the IPs as valuable instruments for confirming policy commitments, promoting stakeholder collaboration and for framework evaluation and accountability. One participant emphasised their importance in maintaining continuity amid shifts in government leadership, noting that the structured policies and actions communicate a stable message. However, others indicated the potential confusion caused by the coexistence of multiple plans, which have preceded the Framework:

"I think they [IPs] cause a little bit of clutter at the moment. It's a confusing picture between the other delivery plans like animal welfare delivery plan...and the Framework implementation plan. So, there's just repetition, duplication of what we're saying. I think there's a risk that somebody will pick up one document and not the other and I think there's a problem there. I'm not really sure we should have implementation plans and then policy specific plans as well. I think probably it's a confusing picture for the public" [INT2].

This point linked to other participants' calls for improving IP accessibility to enhance communication, as discussed in Section 3.1.5.4.

3.1.5.2 Gaps in the Communication Strategy

Several participants expressed that the Framework and IP's practical utility has been undermined by their lack of specificity, inaccessibility and "all these multiple layers of documentation". While participants agreed with the Framework's vision and purpose, some highlighted the principles could be better communicated to stakeholders. For instance, ownership of the Framework and partnership work:

"It was never the intention either, that the framework would be a Welsh Government strategy. It's a plan for Wales, of which we are a part. We have a part to play, more than a part to play. But it's absolutely crucial, it isn't an internal Welsh Government work plan. It's something that all of those who have an interest in animals and looking after them...can buy into" [INT6].

Many participants identified stakeholders who may struggle to see the relevance of the Framework to their profession or lives. These included, the public, companion, hobby and exotic animal owners, foot trimmers and aqua-related professions (farming or oriental). A few participants noted the difficulty in clearly communicating the relevance of the Framework to those working across UK country borders and those outside of Wales engaging with AHW services within Wales ^[footnote 20]. If these various sectors and stakeholders are not targeted in the communication strategy, some participants argued they will not become Framework owners.

Others challenged what they perceived as the loose interpretation of the principles and outcomes. One interviewee argued aspirational objectives are good, such as ensuring “all animals in Wales have a good life” but questioned what this meant in terms of measurable indicators of success. Without additional clarity and detail, several participants struggled to identify clear outcomes and raised doubts about the Framework’s concrete achievements and ability to demonstrate progress. Communicating tangible progress was thought to instil stakeholder confidence, as explained by the following participant: “there doesn’t seem to be much back from ten years of what has been done and what can they [FG] prove that they’ve improved on. Just to give people confidence of what they [FG], if we’re going to go forward with it, have some strategies that they can have some faith in” [F13].

Many participants felt the Framework’s communication strategy had diminished over time. This was attributed to both internal and external pressures, such as COVID-19 and the UK’s exit from the EU, and the loss of a dedicated communications officer, which limited OCVO’s capacity. The cumulative effect reported was less stakeholder engagement and a failure to keep pace with contemporary communication practices (e.g. social media, online), which an interviewee noted has left the Framework outdated. Participant reflections indicated a need to revitalise communication efforts, enhance transparency and Framework visibility.

The evolution of IPs, from annual to biannual, to irregular, was viewed as evidence of limited resources by a few. Some participants noted that despite this shift, the core priorities remained relatively unchanged, raising questions about whether updates genuinely drive progress or merely reaffirm existing commitments. For a few others, it suggested the priorities may not need to change annually and less frequent IPs reflect the resources available for communication, as explained here:

“So, they [IPs] were designed to be annual, then they skipped to twice...currently it is more than two years old...that is largely reflecting the resource available to do all this. It’s also learning from experience that actually the priorities aren’t changing hugely, nor

Footnotes

[20] For example, those working on the border may need targeted communication as they may work within Welsh and English policies and those outside Wales are unlikely to be targeted in the communication yet maybe using veterinary or other kept animal services within Wales.

would you expect them to...we don't need to do it again, we just carry that one forward. I think that was the thinking" [INT6].

Another interviewee remarked that the annual planning discussions which underpin the IPs should be the space where meaningful strategies are developed, rather than simply listing broad priorities without clear action steps [INT4].

A few participants noted they first became aware of the Framework through this project's call for participants. One such participant questioned why their network, despite having direct links with OCVO, had not been more engaged in Framework communications. Others, who were familiar with the Framework, indicated it was not integrated into their work and they did not think it was widely read by their colleagues or the sector. This points to the challenges previously raised by participants (see Section 3.1) of retaining focus on a long-term plan, of communicating framework relevance to a vast range of sectors and supporting accessibility and engagement in some sectors. It also links to the perceived imbalance in attention to certain sectors and species (e.g. largely focused on animal disease prevention, farmed animals). For example, one participant noted that only 2 pages in the [IP 2022 to 2024](#) addressed companion animals.

Many focus group participants argued the need for Framework and/or IP sector-specific structuring to improve accessibility and visibility and thereby engagement with stakeholders. They found it difficult to navigate content as it shifted between farmed, companion and veterinary contexts, without adequately distinguishing their distinct needs. One participant cautioned, in the communication strategy "you've got to treat the sectors differently because we all have very different needs" [F24]. However, where sector specific plans have been developed (e.g. WAWP), the overlapping documents (see Section 3.2) were seen by some as confusing or clouding the AHW message.

Poor feedback mechanisms within the Framework governance groups and with stakeholders was seen to hinder communication, particularly since COVID-19 (see Section 3.1.2.3). Focus group participants expressed frustration at the timing of requests for feedback, the one-way (top-down) communication and lack of visible responsiveness to stakeholder input. This was echoed by FG members, who felt their role in policy and plan feedback needed to occur earlier in the process. They also reiterated broader stakeholder doubts about the value of their feedback, for example: "...I would go and present to other groups and it would just be like, 'Thank you very much. That was very interesting' and you don't hear anything else back..." [F4].

The importance of showcasing FG contributions was also emphasised by interviewees, with one explaining:

"Well I think if we develop a new policy where the framework group have been engaged, we need to be telling stakeholders about that and we need to share what their role has been in developing that policy, because that shows that kind of two-way engagement, that we are trying to communicate with stakeholders and get that bottom up information, then also sharing back with the stakeholders, you know, this is what we've done, this was the role and it's that kind of transparency as well" [INT5].

Missed opportunities for critical feedback to support systematic data and evidence integration was noted by a few stakeholders. One participant noted their organisation (Farming Connect) generated extensive information on farm animal health. As there was no formal mechanism for feeding this into the Framework, they felt some policy decisions were disconnected from key evidence sources.

Altogether, participant reflections indicate that while the Framework has effectively outlined the broad commitments and established a sensible communication strategy for engaging with many stakeholders, further clarity, transparency and inclusivity is desired. They suggest the communication strategy and related resources should be revised to enhance collaboration and stakeholder engagement and confidence (see Section 3.3 for further suggestions).

3.1.6. Summary

There have been many successes in the Framework; participants generally agreed that the Framework's priorities and principles, including collaboration, shared responsibility and evidence-based decision-making, remain relevant and have fortified progress in some key AHW sectors. Progress was most apparent to participants in farm animal health (e.g. TB and BVD eradication, antimicrobial resistance). More recently, developments in companion animal welfare were cited (e.g. WAWP). Many participants viewed the Framework as a vital reference tool for understanding the shared principles that underpin the AHW approach. Linked to this, all interviewees valued the Framework's ability to unify stakeholders and foster alignment across diverse sectors and agendas. The political relevance of the Framework and its role in accountability and defending the resources used to respond to AHW, were valued by some participants.

Participants also offered a nuanced picture of the Framework's governance architecture. They generally recognised the strength of its independent and expert foundation, the strategic value of the FG and the effectiveness of a well-integrated secretariat. The Framework, subsequent plans and FG meeting minutes indicate a robust communication and engagement strategy was planned. This included plans to capitalise on existing networks and partnerships, invite stakeholders to register their interest and areas of AHW expertise through a database, provide annual updates through IPs, facilitate inclusion and provide transparency through FG meetings and minutes and evidence-based delivery (e.g. evidence cards). Participants suggest this was, in part, effectively implemented. For many participants, stakeholder engagement was effective and the benefits reciprocal. Document analysis evidenced considerable industry and stakeholder engagement by the FG. Participant data and document analysis did not indicate whether the stakeholder database was ever developed. The research data did reveal that while the IPs, evidence cards and FG meeting minutes were not delivered as intended, they were reportedly maintained or published regularly for many years.

The Framework accomplishments were however achieved against a backdrop of considerable internal and external challenges and barriers. Most significantly, participants commented on the broad remit of the Framework and how it was unrealistic to expect parity

across the AHW sectors. Rather, most participants identified a sector and species imbalance in Framework principles, FG representation, stakeholder engagement and partnership work and annual priorities. According to participants, this had resulted in stakeholder frustration, with some sectors not engaging or withdrawing from engagement. The distinct omissions cited by participants include engagement with the public (e.g. companion animal owners, hobby animal owners), enforcement agencies, the aqua sector, kept exotic and wild animal professionals and SMEs, more generally.

For some, the resources available have not been sufficient to meet the magnitude of the AHW remit. OCVO experienced cuts to staff and resources, which participants reported impacted Framework delivery, the communication strategy and feedback loop. Stakeholders also reportedly experienced a combination of economic challenges which limited resources and thereby their ability to engage with the Framework. In this context, participants argued Framework collaboration must be meaningful, rewarding and impactful for stakeholders. The need for evidenced tangible Framework outputs is also linked to stakeholder engagement. Participants expressed frustration over the lack of evidenced outcomes and the inability to hold the Welsh government to account.

FG participants perceived the available resources as limiting their role (e.g. time, IT support), despite their vague and expanding remit. Some participants made a distinction between the pre-COVID-19 FG (as driven, ambitious and active) and post-COVID-19 FG (as routine, with declining momentum). The FG size and sector representation was queried by many participants, as was their current profile and influence. Even so, the FG was viewed by some participants as a vital bridge, translating stakeholder insights into government action, while offering both critical scrutiny and collaborative support.

Participants called for more targeted, transparent and inclusive communication approaches, including clearer feedback mechanisms, improved document coherence and a renewed emphasis on accountability and accessibility. The Framework's IPs were generally viewed as more accessible and functional than the overarching Framework. However, many participants desired transparency on how IP priorities (e.g. criteria and evidence) were selected.

In considering how the Framework is communicated, participants wanted both more and less detail and more and less overlap with other strategic documents. Many supported the existing combination of an overarching strategic document aligned with a more detailed plan. However, it was suggested that these must consider specific sectors and issues to ensure they are meaningful to the entire Framework audience. These reflections evidence the difficulties of communicating an overarching Framework to a vast stakeholder audience.

Many of the points raised here are examined further with a forward-looking perspective in the Future Strategy section (3.3). Prior to this, alignment between the Framework priorities and other existing policies and plans are now examined.

3.2. Framework alignment with other Welsh Government plans, schemes and strategies

This section looks at Research Objective 2, which reviews how well existing plans and strategies reflect Welsh Government AHW priorities. These findings are informed by the document analysis and participant data.

In the decade of Framework delivery, various plans, strategies and policies have been developed by the Welsh Government. These documents (see Section 2.3 and Annex B) align with, overlap and extend Framework priorities and thereby inform the development of a future Strategy. Each document is summarised and reviewed in line with [Framework principles](#) and the Welsh Government priorities relating to AHW ([IP 2022 to 2024](#)) in Annex G. The key findings are now presented.

3.2.1 Key areas of Framework alignment and implications for AHW priorities

There are several UK and Welsh Government plans, strategies and policies which align and intersect with the Framework and AHW priorities (see Annex G). These documents either provide comparable high-level broad aspirations for enhanced AHW (e.g. [Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015](#) and [Programme for Government](#) (PfG)) or more detailed strategic plans focused on a specific area of AHW (e.g. [Animal Welfare Plan for Wales 2021 to 26](#)).

The documents complement rather than replace the Framework. Consistent messaging on sustainable practices, environmental protection, stakeholder collaboration, One Health and animal welfare (as a strategic priority) are evident in more recent policy. Two participants referred to this as a “golden thread” [INT2, F17], suggesting a cohesive approach is evolving linking key issues intrinsic to enhanced AHW. The guiding Framework principles of prevention, stakeholder responsibility, partnership, economic rationale and effective enforcement are integral to many of the documents (e.g. [Five-Year Implementation Plan for Wales 2019 to 2024 on Antimicrobial Resistance \(AMR\) in Animals and the Environment](#), [Wales TB Eradication Programme Delivery Plan: March 2023](#)).

Questionnaire respondents²¹ were asked to choose which Welsh Government policies (Annex E) the Framework aligned with. Table 4 shows that most respondents agreed the various policies supported the Framework AHW priorities. This is consistent with other participant data. However, interview and focus group discussions emphasised policies on TB, notifiable diseases, animal welfare and developments in the [Sustainable Farming Scheme](#) (SFS). In addition to these, FG meeting minutes referred to the relevance of EU related policies such as the [Rural Development Programme for Wales](#) and the development of post-EU exit policies.

Table 4: The policies the Framework aligns with, according to questionnaire respondents

Policy Title	Number of Respondents [out of 7]
Animal Welfare Act 2006	7
Animal Welfare Plan for Wales (2021 to 2026)	7
Animal and Environment Antimicrobial Resistance Plan	7
Bovine TB Eradication Programme	6
The Welsh Government's Contingency Plan for Exotic Notifiable Diseases of Animals	6
Sustainable Farming Scheme	6
Implementation Plan for the Healthy Bees Plan 2030	5
Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015	4

Source: project questionnaire data

Description of Table 4: the table summarises the questionnaire responses to which Welsh Government policies the Framework aligned with. The policies are listed on the left and the number of respondents choosing each option on the right.

A few participants argued the overlap between policies was confusing and unhelpful at times (particularly when viewing the various plans and IPs). One discussed needing a clearer 'journey' through the relevant documents for stakeholders. Another suggested "there's probably parts in each of them [documents] that conflict" [INT5]. The document analysis did not show conflicting focus or outcomes; rather, it highlighted the complexity of addressing competing AHW and related priorities. For example, as one interviewee noted, good animal health does not necessarily mean good welfare. Likewise, prioritising climate change strategies and the environment may affect rural communities and AHW.

The analysis highlighted the increasing pace of legislative, policy and scientific developments in AHW, which underlined the importance of flexibility and adaptability in a future Strategy. Section 3.3 considers some options for achieving this, including the need for embedded resilience to respond to the unique challenges and opportunities that will arise within and without Wales.

The document and participant data analysis also highlighted limitations in the Framework, which could be considered in the development of a future Strategy. Several participants strongly argued the language of the Strategy, could better reflect critical developments in animal sentience, 'One Health' and environmental sustainability and climate change adaption strategies. One respondent, for example, proposed the broader impact of climate change adaptation on AHW and farmers needed further consideration. Another, noted the

UK Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act, (2022), which places a requirement on the UK Governments to give due regard to policy impact on sentient beings.

The document analysis found a range of approaches adopted to evidence outcomes and evaluate progress in other policies, which could be considered in a new Strategy. These included detailed performance indicators and targets and a theory of change model. As the Framework was one of the first to adopt a results-based accountability approach, lessons may be learned from subsequent policies which have also used this process for evidencing outcomes, such as the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#). The limited monitoring and evidence base for Framework priorities and outcomes was recognised by many participants. While it may not be possible within a high-level concise Strategy to provide this level of detail, participants offered suggestions for evidencing outcomes in Section 3.3. The focus on stakeholder education and training in more recent policies is also notable, as some participants identified this as an important principle in AHW to raise awareness and support behavioural change and compliance. However, this is not embedded in the current Framework.

Despite the Framework guiding principle of ‘enforcing standards effectively’, participants identified the commitment to enforcement or the implementation of enforcement as a weakness in the current approach. As discussed in Section 3.3, some suggested a future Strategy could more clearly delineate to stakeholders how enforcement will be supported, to support compliance and the measurement of outcomes.

3.3 Future Wales AHW Strategy

According to most participants the current Framework has provided a common and consistent vision and tool for the Welsh Government and stakeholders and stimulated positive change in the AHW sector. All research participants agreed a future Strategy is needed to expand Framework achievements. The term Strategy is used here to refer to the planned future iteration of what is currently called the Framework. Participant reflections on the nature and focus of a future Strategy, its governance and implementation are now considered.

3.3.1 Strategy duration

While more questionnaire respondents (4 compared to 3, respectively) favoured a 5 rather than the 10-year strategy proposed by other participants, most participants recognised the benefits of adopting a longer-term strategy ^[footnote 22]. The benefits cited included a consistent apolitical AHW agenda and the opportunity for cohesion between the various animal health and wellbeing (AHW) related policies and plans. One participant argued that rather than reducing the ambition of the Strategy in terms of a shorter duration, “I would have fewer things that we’re seeking to deliver, so we actually deliver something” [F8].

Another interviewee, drawing parallels to the [Well-being of Future Generations Act \(Wales\) 2015](#), questioned the need for a specific timeframe, as AHW should be a continuous concern. Another argued a new Strategy should be informed by horizon scanning, considering possible challenges and opportunities over the next 20 years. This was supported by other participants who felt a long-term strategy must be “a bit more reactive to what’s happening on the ground” [F16] and resilient:

“I feel like current strategies; they don’t allow for things not to go as planned...and [the Welsh Government should] not be afraid to have that as an inherent part of the strategy because sometimes governments see it as failure when actually it’s not because you can’t foresee everything” [F15].

Some participants proposed the use of regular reviews to facilitate flexibility and evaluate if the Strategy was fit for purpose. While perspectives varied across participant groups, in general a 10-year strategy with sufficient flexibility was favoured by most.

3.3.2. Strategy priorities and outcomes

Participants discussed the scope, focus and format of a future Strategy and its cross-cutting relevance. Some emphasised the need for a clearly articulated Strategy, one that specifies its goals, intended audience and tangible outcomes. For example, one suggested clarity is first needed on who the Strategy is for, should it “guide the government on what they do and how they influence things” or serve as “guidance for the industry” [F25]. Another participant

Footnotes

[22] See Section 2.6 for limitations in interpreting data from this small survey sample size.

noted, “I think a clearer strategy with those better-defined goals and outcomes would be good” [F21].

When asked which principles and outcomes from the current Framework should be carried forward, all participants agreed that the overarching goals are well established and widely understood. For example, “everybody understands prevention is better than cure” [INT4]. Participants valued a preventative approach, the focus on One Health, One Welfare and an outcomes-based Strategy. Questionnaire respondents also identified the biosecurity plan and UK and devolved Government collaboration as important.

Some participants proposed the Strategy include outcomes specifically aimed at raising awareness and improving AHW education and training across stakeholder groups. One participant, for example, observed that “there isn't much about public awareness and education in the current one [Framework], so we could perhaps thread that in there [Strategy] so that there's a responsibility to bring people with us” [F17]. Another reflected that “it comes back to how much we are perhaps getting slowly better at understanding the routes to which you can change people's behaviour in a constructive way” [F6]. Similarly, one participant suggested making “responsible choices” and “responsible decision making” an outcome [F15]. These types of outcomes were evident in the other policy documents analysed, and could be used as a template for a future Strategy (e.g. [Action Plan for the Food and Drink Industry 2014 to 2020](#)).

As noted in Section 3.2, some participants reasoned the Strategy should articulate how its goals align with Welsh Government manifesto commitments ([PfG](#)) and other devolved and UK wide policies and legislation, ensuring a clear “fit” between Strategy outcomes and existing AHW priorities. Similarly, many participants felt a future Strategy must robustly convey the importance of AHW, within and beyond the AHW sectors. As one participant argued: “as part of a strategic plan moving forward, there needs to be some indication that...your [OCVO] department will work with other government departments in shared areas and collaborate accordingly” [F14]. This may support the cross-cutting concerns of One Health and further prioritise AHW within other Welsh Government departments, such as public health and housing.

3.3.3. Strategy language

Many participants observed that overarching concepts such as One Health, One Welfare, climate change and sustainability and animal sentience have evolved significantly since the Framework's publication. As one noted, “the One Health way of thinking was still in its infancy back then, so it will be interesting to see how they [Welsh Government] add what we know ten years on from there” [F24]. Another interviewee reflecting on a recent First Minister speech on the green economy, argued: “we don't have to grow and expand at the expense of the environment...having that kind of green economy as part of our [Strategy] core would be quite helpful” [INT2]. For others, this meant the Strategy language should look forward by recognising animal sentience, rather than mirror past language which emphasised the monetary value (or “commodification” [F21]) of animals.

3.3.4. Strategy structure and scope

Participants consistently viewed the future Strategy as refreshing or updating rather than replacing the Framework. In refreshing the Framework, nearly all participants wanted clarity on what the broad principles and outcomes meant in practice. They argued the vague language provided too much scope for interpretation and linked this to a lack of accountability and measurable outcomes. For example, one interviewee explained a better balance is required: “There can be elements in there [the new Strategy] that do tie us a little bit and hold [us accountable]...it’s finding that balance, isn’t it, about it being so high level it’s up here and they’re just meaningless words...and I interpret that as I want” [INT3]. An FG participant added that this clarity is also needed to support annual priority setting and the direction of a future FG (referred to hereafter as the strategy group [SG]). Both of these were noted by participants as areas of weakness in the Framework (see Section 3.1).

According to most participants, further clarity is required on how the Strategy would address these overarching principles and outcomes. The gaps identified by many participants (see Section 3.1) refer to the implementation rather than the focus of the Strategy. For example, one interviewee emphasised enforcement: “I think that has got a lot worse over ten years...It still needs to be there...what is missing is putting that into practice and actually making it happen” [INT6]. Several participants wanted re-emphasis on delivering an evidenced and outcome-based approach. Interview and focus group participants emphasised the need for transparent evidence-based decisions on future AHW priorities and the more robust data collection to do so.

To tackle these concerns, many participants recommended the future Strategy retain the top-level Framework concepts (e.g. principles, strategic outcomes). However, rather than simply say it would achieve these, the Strategy would be “more prescriptive about what it actually does and how it works” [INT4] and how it will be delivered. The [National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management in Wales](#) Risk Management in Wales was presented by one interviewee as a good example of the desired approach. This Strategy included the overarching aims and objectives, how these are measured over time, the timeframe for doing so and the lead agency responsible for this action. The [GB AHW Framework’s](#) enforcement section was described by another participant as explicitly identifying which bodies can intervene to: (i) protect human and nonhuman health, (ii) protect and promote animal welfare and (iii) safeguard the wider economy, environment and society.

To clarify the evidence and outcome-based approach, one participant suggested adopting a cyclical improvement approach, such as the Animal Health Improvement Cycle (AHIC): “now that’s the sort of philosophy that you could have for this type of Strategy in that you set out what your targets are, you put in remedies, but then it’s revisited regularly with the stakeholders” [F23]. The collation of data was also noted by participants to be key to the AHIC process.

While many participants argued for the need for greater clarity and thereby detail, they also expressed an incompatible desire for a shorter strategy, noting that “the shorter, the better”

[INT2] often translated into wider engagement. Most participants praised the Framework's 'short' length as a strength. Others suggested additional detail could undermine Strategy delivery and flexibility: "we've had three different ministers since then [the Framework launch] and a pandemic and various other things....you need that overarching strategy, but you need the flexibility of when things crop up to be dealt with" [F5]. The desire expressed by many participants for sector bespoke Strategy IPs to enhance relevance and engagement, also conflicted with comments that the existence of so many strategies and plans has impeded clear communication and understanding of the Framework (Section 3.1)

In drawing together broader participant discussions on how to balance these challenges and structure the Strategy, support for 2 approaches was apparent:

1. Guiding principles model: An overarching Strategy which would articulate high level outcomes, principles and priorities, providing further clarity on what these mean in practice and how they will be achieved or measured. This Strategy would link, through signposting on a website for example, to more detailed, sector specific plans (e.g. Implementation Plans for TB or Animal welfare), which provide the detail: precise targets, timeframes and lead responsibilities. This structure would ensure the Strategy keeps its overarching vision, highlights areas of overlap and prevents siloing across sectors.

One participant suggested that several subject specific plans "could be easier to apply and scrutinise" [F7]. Another argued it could reduce the volume of documents: "So, there's a short current document, there is one in development and then there is the principles and why we're doing it [Strategy] document" [F8].

2. Measuring outcomes model: Under this approach, the Strategy would begin with a concise overview of its high-level outcomes, principles and priorities, then proceed directly into sector- or species-specific sections. Each section could detail priorities, outcomes and supporting evidence for each. This approach would need to avoid unnecessary duplication on issues that span all groups.

An annual IP, also divided by priority animal group or sector, would allow the Strategy to respond to emerging concerns. As F24 observed, the current Framework at only 18 pages, "was not the easiest read...because it kept on jumping from farmed to companion to veterinary to farm [animals/sectors]". Instead, they proposed the Strategy should "link these slightly better but delineate between the different needs of different sectors". In this way, the structure would provide relevant information for each stakeholder group and provide the flexibility to update specific sections as priorities evolve.

The benefits and limitations of each approach were noted by participants. In general, participant comments appeared to favour a short overarching Strategy linked to existing and bespoke, sector specific plans. This would combine the noted accessibility of the Framework (see Section 3.1) with clear signposting to sector-specific and detailed implementation. This approach may also provide clarity as many participants noted

confusion arising from the development of various related plans and IPs after the Framework was established.

3.3.5. The classification and prioritisation of animal groups and sectors

While partnership and joint ownership of the Framework were desired by all, participants stressed that the Strategy must strike a better balance between AHW sectors and species. One interviewee recognised both the need for a shared AHW Strategy and that consolidating all kept animal species under one Strategy might simply be too ambitious. This reflected other participants' concerns, that it was challenging to cover a broad spectrum of animal species without diluting focus and limiting meaningful engagement with the wide range of stakeholders.

Some participants also noted the Strategy should consider the language around sector groups. While categorisation is needed, it must be mindful of the extensive ways in which humans use and engage with animals. For example, exotic animals are no longer only kept in zoos, but owned privately as collections or as a hobby. As one stakeholder participant explained: "I work in a hundred per cent exotic animal practice here in Cardiff and I'm seeing parrots and reptiles and fish and racing pigeons and frogs and terrapins and all sorts, all of which are privately owned predominantly rather than kept in zoos" [F22].

Although the Framework intended to represent all kept animal sectors, many participants found species and sector gaps in the AHW priorities that could be addressed in the Strategy. For example, one interviewee commented on the incongruity between the Framework and Welsh Government priorities, considering the Welsh Government "have so much attention around companion animals, pets and their welfare, I don't think that our [Welsh Government] frameworks and general direction actually has that at its core enough" [INT2]. Even with the priority given to farmed species, some participants argued for specific Strategy focus on poultry and game birds and aqua species which they argued were overlooked in broader livestock policies.

Most participants also agreed not all sectors can be prioritised and stakeholders need to unite behind a defined and achievable set of objectives. As one participant explained, the Strategy "could run the risk of trying to do too much and not achieve anything. So, we just need to be aware that they [AHW priorities] can't be everything to everybody" [F17]. However, opinions on which areas to prioritise diverged according to stakeholders' interests and what had been previously addressed in the Framework. Some argued the need to support the momentum in addressing longstanding issues, such as disease management: "Disease prevention generally, I think needs to be a priority, I know that's already included in the Framework, but there could be...a stronger emphasis on there" [F17]. Others prioritised addressing the species imbalance: "while there is a lot of policy/law on farming, companion animals and other animals have limited protection... Does the [Strategy] need to point to these?" [INT3].

Many participants wanted a clear and transparent process for setting Strategy priorities. One, for example suggested a prioritisation framework ("in terms of numbers of animals

affected, level of suffering, feasibility of change” [F18]). This approach was challenged by 2 questionnaire respondents, who argued the commercial value and species mass alone cannot be the justification for prioritisation. For example, failure to consider less-mainstream sectors could result in prioritising one sector and unintentionally placing “immense bureaucratic burden” on another through policy requirements, “with no demonstrable benefits to animal welfare” [S5]. An interviewee suggested factors such as public interest, citizens’ concerns, [PfGs](#) and existing evidence could inform these: “We’re [Welsh Government] here to serve the people of Wales, so I would imagine the people of Wales should be telling us what we should be focusing on” [INT3].

3.3.6. Governance

Overall, participants broadly supported the existing governance structure: the Strategy sitting within OCVO, who would provide a monitoring team and secretarial support, with the backing of a group of external experts to guide implementation (see Section 3.1 and Figure 3). However, concerns were raised about the resources required to sustain this model and about the composition and role of a future expert group, referred to here as the Strategy Group (SG). To address the perceived resource pressures, one participant proposed that a cost-effective solution would be to employ a Strategy secretary as part of the SG, or to apply the Animal Welfare Network Wales approach, where a partner organisation provides secretarial support as part of its membership. Some participants stressed that governance and resources link directly to Strategy ownership, whereby the Governance structure should be embedding “cost and responsibility sharing”. For example, one interviewee argued:

“If we want our partners and stakeholders to take responsibility, we have to start...giving them the authority to make decisions and let that go from Welsh Government and also from the Framework Group. I think that is a piece of work that needs to be looked at in the next ten years, as to how do we make that happen...we never talk about handing over some of the authority” [INT6].

A focus group participant argued the Strategy must signal that AHW is the responsibility of all Government departments; however they may intersect with AHW. Their engagement could provide AHW resources beyond those of the rural affairs departments. Other participants pointed to existing resources which could be better mobilised for the Strategy. For example, using the [UK Animal Welfare Committee](#), the Welsh Government Social Research team and the existing veterinary and other scientific research communities to support data collection and analysis. Stakeholders in some sectors were also an untapped resource according to several participants.

As one interviewee suggested, OCVO would need to increase secretariat support for the Strategy, which is supported by participant evaluation of the stakeholder engagement and communication strategy (see Section 3.1). As one interviewee noted, if the Strategy was to expand stakeholder involvement “we probably need to have more people on board to have more programme boards or advisory groups” [INT2]. Many focus group participants indicated the resources available limited the FG’s role and status (see Section 3.1). One FG

member claimed that they are an advisory body without a budget: “We don't have that manpower, we don't have the financial resources to do it” [F2].

More generally FG participants argued better remuneration (currently members are provided with £92 per day for 20 days ^[footnote23]) would acknowledge the Group members' expertise and contributions. Despite the risks associated with increased online visibility noted by one interviewee, FG participants felt a greater online presence would strengthen both internal cohesion and external transparency. Likewise, they considered a group email or individual FG email addresses, rather than using their personal business email addresses, would enhance the group's identity and profile, (e.g. AHW Board members in England have a DEFRA email address). They indicated higher visibility is essential if they are to be “honest challengers of government [and] honest providers of suggestions and advice to government” [F4]. Other stakeholder participants recognised the challenge:

“it is a big brief and they [FG] are [a] small team working on this and I think the Framework Group...have achieved quite a lot in their time and others in the department as well. So, I think it is a reflection that they have got a small team and we're aware of that and the ambitions are lofty which maybe will require more of an investment in resource. Maybe that could be part of the considerations for what happens with the next Framework and the delivery of that” [F21].

Participant comments underline the importance of adequate resourcing to support a strong governance structure.

3.3.6.1. Strategy Group role and responsibilities

Although most participants agreed an external body of experts to support delivery of a future Strategy was necessary, opinions diverged on the group's precise role, responsibilities and composition. For this report, this proposed future expert group is referred to as the Strategy Group (SG). The need to explicitly define the SG's remit and its place within the overall governance structure was a recurring theme among participants. For example, are they “there to drive things or...to hold us [the Welsh government] accountable?” [INT3], what is “the status of the group” [INT5]. Clarity on the role, according to some participants would set realistic expectations and help stakeholders engage effectively with the future SG. One interviewee emphasised the focus of the SG should be on “non-statutory” work (e.g. non legislative), as their role must remain “advisory”, informing policy rather than dictating it. Others suggested the groups remit should not be policymaking, setting priorities or funding decisions, but advising on these.

Some participants advised the SG's role in these processes would need to be precise, transparent and involve a feedback loop. They expected highlighting the SG's role as a critical friend in developing policy or informing funding decisions would enhance their status internally and externally. However, for this to be achieved, the SG would need to be

Footnote

[23] Public Appointment rates are determined centrally by the Welsh Government and applied to the FG.

involved in Welsh Government processes at an earlier point, for example, when policy is being developed. To further elevate the SG's profile, FG participants argued the Strategy should stipulate the SG Chair meets at least annually with the Cabinet Secretary (see Section 3.1). This relationship was viewed as crucial to “drive what the next manifesto commitments are and the direction of travel”, because otherwise “if there’s a vacuum there, it’s left to the ministers to pretty much set up what they want to do.” [INT2].

Some participants argued a future SG should be more active in holding the Welsh Government to account as the current FG “lacks a bit of bite”. To foster this, one interviewee suggested using an internal Welsh Government reporting process through the secretariat: “every month we have to update BIRT...why can’t we pull that out and give it to the...framework group that we answer to?” [INT3]. The desire for better accountability also applied to the SG itself. Several participants pointed out that phrasing in the FG ToR such as “reviewing the progress of outcomes” needed to be clarified and measurable and a feedback loop for stakeholders embedded in the governance process.

3.3.6.2. Strategy Group membership and engagement

Despite FG participants arguing 8 members can provide “a wide range of experience and expertise across many areas of animal health and welfare” (D: unpublished FG document 2024), most participants desired wider representation. Specifically, they noted the group size should reflect the remit of the Strategy and ToR: “if the overall Strategy affects all animals, then it needs to be covered in the priorities and the expertise of the group” [F18]. One interviewee emphasised the importance of a SG that is informing policymaking being able to represent the different sectors. Another participant noted “lay people” (e.g. farmers, public, volunteers) made up the majority of AHW stakeholders, thereby questioning their role and representation in an advisory group.

One participant suggested “you really need to ask Welsh Government what value this Framework Group has provided to them and...do they [Welsh Government] want another way in parallel or separately with regard to these species groups” [FH14]. Other participants argued broader membership would reflect developments elsewhere, such as [the Scottish Animal Welfare Committee](#). Alternatively, several participants suggested retaining a small top-level board or steering group, which would oversee or feed into existing and new specialist expert subgroups, who would better represent the various AHW sectors and species. The observation that “covering all those topics in one group is going to be really challenging” [F18] was echoed by many participants.

An interviewee described how this approach could work: “develop a group [board] which is more connected with Welsh Government and is more involved in decision making – and beneath this, groups who work on specific issues – these groups tell people these are the things we’re doing at a higher level”. This could work with established networks (e.g. TB programme board, TAG), thereby reducing the need for more resources and offering a structured feedback mechanism. Under this model, participants envisioned the SG Chair overseeing all subgroups, or a small SG whose members would each manage a subgroup and the feedback loop.

The ability to rapidly respond to evolving AHW priorities using this approach was noted by a few participants, particularly with the development of temporary expert teams. These were explained as: “you put together a task and finish group and when it’s resolved or agreed, then you can disband them, otherwise you end up with groups hanging around forever without maybe a defined role” [F19]. The examples provided by participants included the [UK Zoos Expert Committee](#), BVD Group and DEFRA Species groups.

Broader stakeholder engagement through these subgroups was also proposed to prevent Welsh Government and industry stakeholders from working at cross purposes or “reinventing the wheel” [F19]. This participant also argued it could reduce resource burdens and increase outcomes. The value of this approach was evidenced by one interviewee: by “bringing organisations together and getting them to do the work... We [Welsh Government] double up the amount of stuff we’re delivering and we’re not doing it all and everybody gets a sense of ‘okay yeah, I contributed to doing that piece of work’” [INT3].

For some focus group participants, including FG members, communication and partnership work should be the key priority for the SG. FG participants recommended keeping quarterly meetings, ideally returning to full day, hybrid formats (online and/or face-to-face), while also creating a digital platform for regular group interaction. They also suggested meetings should be more focused and outcome driven. This was supported by one interviewee, who proposed “that each discussion addresses actionable questions, such as: ‘what is our role in this? What are we going to do? Do we need to feed back? Do we need to do this?’” [INT4]. These considerations link to the need for transparency on priorities and reducing annual priorities to a manageable number. Several participants felt publishing the SG meeting minutes enhanced transparency. As one noted, “third parties can follow the conversation and ask, ‘can I get involved with this?’” [F13].

3.3.7. Strategy partnership work and stakeholder engagement

All respondents recognised the value of partnership work and stakeholder engagement in a future Strategy. Reflecting on the existing Framework, one participant observed the starting point for the Strategy must be that “everyone’s working towards just one common goal which is to improve welfare standards within Wales”. FG members shared their aspirational view of taking “the people of Wales with us” [F2].

While the research for this report was viewed by a few participants as a “good start” for collaboration and stakeholder “buy-in”, further engagement in developing or (for some) co-developing the Strategy was wanted by many participants. Examples of effective partnerships and meaningful stakeholder cooperation were provided by participants, including the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park’s and South Wales TB eradication board, the SFS roundtable and England’s Animal Sentience Committee. An FG participant recalled the Welsh Government quickly created a stakeholder group during the exotic disease preparedness effort, showing how rapidly assembled networks can engage key actors. Another participant explained: “if you used the right people in the right way, then it can move a strategy forward, as opposed to not having the engagement” [F15].

Participants indicated support for a multi-thread engagement approach supported by a dedicated team or resource to target the various categories of stakeholders. To reach beyond the core engaged stakeholders, 2 participants proposed the development of a quarterly forum for broader stakeholder input. A few other participants suggested ‘deep dive’ days with counterparts in other nations, reflecting broader calls from participants to enhance cross border engagement in the Strategy.

In line with the stated Framework intent, interviewees emphasised that stakeholders must take ownership of the Strategy, with Welsh Government helping collaboration rather than owning and controlling it. The Strategy governance role would be to create opportunities for stakeholder collaboration and encourage sector self-reliance. While most participants wanted engagement opportunities, few participants (other than some from established industry groups) implied the capacity for sector self-reliance. The differing capabilities and resources across sectors and actors were raised by many participants as an important consideration in the new Strategy. This was particularly significant, according to some, for engaging less mainstream and underrepresented sectors and stakeholders. One participant cautioned that smaller organisations run “a much leaner model of operation with...a smaller number of people” [F20], making it harder to embrace engagement opportunities.

In addition to resource limitations, participants recognised 2 potential barriers to Strategy engagement:

1. **Feedback mechanisms:** Participants generally desired a reliable and quicker feedback loop than they felt currently exists within the Framework. More specifically, one participant suggested the Strategy provide a structured feedback process to capitalise on industry organisations who have questions, research ideas, insights into future industry problems and possible resources and data they can feed into the Strategy.
2. **Stakeholder mapping:** Most participants recognised the Welsh Government “have a good handle on some groups, but not all” [F9]. Without further stakeholder mapping, participants argued it was difficult to reveal the gaps, to understand stakeholders’ strengths and skillsets or to effectively call for evidence and expertise. A strategy mapping exercise would need to go beyond the existing networks and partnerships. As several participants noted, not all professionals are members of associations and not all stakeholders are part of an established network and some important stakeholders, such as the public, are dispersed.

A few participants underlined the need to involve enforcement stakeholders. For example, Local Authorities in licensing discussions, as “they’re the ones that have to implement on the ground” [F12] and “often...are the last to know about these things” [F23]. Reaching out to these partners would not only engage “a bigger, more diverse audience but also to increase funding for future activity as well” [F17]. Most participants were supportive of adopting the Framework stakeholder database previously discussed (see Section 3.1). One indicated it was “absolutely critical” to avoid the SG “becoming an echo chamber” [F10].

The key message from participants was that the Strategy should build on existing partnerships and networks while actively seeking out underrepresented voices and creating new opportunities for engagement and feedback.

3.3.8. Strategy communication and implementation

The 6 questionnaire respondents who replied to the question “How should a future strategy be communicated?” pointed to a communication strategy which would reach all stakeholders and enhanced partnership work and input from stakeholders. The need for frequent and clear communication was also emphasised. These comments are consistent with those of many other participants, who also discussed how to engage stakeholders, the multi-tiered communication tools available and the importance of building in feedback loops.

For many participants, including 4 (of 7) survey respondents, the IPs have been an important conduit in feeding back and forward to stakeholders. Participants discussed reviewing the format and role of IPs for communicating Strategy progress.

3.3.8.1. Strategy Communication

Many participants noted the challenge for a new Strategy document is to find a balance between detail and brevity, in which the purpose and intent is clearly communicated to a varied audience. Participants suggested it must be communicated in a way that is meaningful and captures the attention of these distinct sectors (see Section 3.3.4). In addition to recognising the unique needs of different AHW sector groups, several participants also noted the Strategy needed to fulfil different requirements across stakeholder types. Stakeholders, such as members of the public and kept animal workers, needed brevity and simplicity in the Strategy. A more robust and focused document may be helpful for Ministers. However, civil servants, professionals and NGO leaders had different needs, better communicated in a detailed Strategy.

Several participants suggested a big Strategy launch to capture interest and discussed drawing stakeholders into the Strategy “journey” [F17]. The journey involved developing a narrative that can be repeated over the lifetime of the Strategy to remind stakeholders of its progress and their role and ownership. Engaging certain sectors was perceived by many participants to be a key Strategy challenge: “It’s harder just to find the voice of an average – a normal farmer or somebody who represents the collective pet owners of Wales” [INT2]. Therefore, the motivations and perspectives of these stakeholders are less likely to be understood and incorporated into the Strategy, despite their centre role in AHW.

To enhance stakeholder inclusivity, many participants supported a multi-tiered and sector targeted communication strategy. As one interviewee explained:

“is there a difference between companion animals and farmed animals, does that change the perspective? I guess it does slightly and the communication mechanisms... mechanisms of engagement are very different” [INT1].

Various suggestions were made by participants on how to improve Strategy communication, reflecting modern communication processes. For example, the use of a bespoke website, social media, email lists, face-to face events and meetings, sector publications and using sector gatekeepers (including industry influencers and vets).

An effective communication plan, a few participants cautioned, should be mindful of the administrative burden involved. While not without their challenges, the following technical suggestions offered a broad cost-effective approach for engaging a wide range of participants:

- an electronic emailing list which could provide stakeholders with a periodical briefing note or quarterly newsletter
- a dedicated and accessible (simple) Strategy website to clearly signpost stakeholders to relevant materials and developments and highlight progress
- a social media presence which could include alerts (e.g. animal health, events) for stakeholders
- the use of QR codes on leaflets and document (such as a leaflet given by sellers to companion animal owners)

A dedicated Strategy website was argued to be necessary for signposting stakeholders to the Strategy, various plans and policy documents positioned around the key sector groups (e.g. a page for each sector). One interviewee gave an example of this: “‘Okay, these are the common diseases and our approaches to dealing with them.’ You don’t really need to set them all out in a document, but you could have a link to find out more if you wished to” [INT2]. Another explained, rather than these stakeholders needing to read a comprehensive strategy, the website would detail “workstreams coming off with a fair bit of detail in them and updates”. However, those who are interested can still view the overall strategic approach and “glimpse...all the other streams” [F23].

This approach could improve cross-nation and cross-sector (e.g. One Health) engagement, as the website could link to a broader range of sources and sectors and help the Welsh Government role of connecting stakeholders. The existing Welsh Government website was viewed by some as too outdated to accommodate this approach. One participant suggested the Scottish Government website as a useful template.

While many participants embraced digital tools for their ease and flexibility, several participants, including FG members, valued conventional face-to-face communication and direct action on the ground. Face-to-face engagements (e.g. stakeholder roundtable, sector day) would require more resources than digital tools but were believed by some participants to produce more meaningful encounters and outcomes. One explained: “I always find you get the best outcomes if you gather people together in a room” [F16].

Participants also wanted the SG’s role clearly communicated. This including developing their ‘brand’, to distinguish the SG from other entities, such as the Welsh Government. This distinction was important for engaging stakeholders:

“if you want a farmer to do something, they might not listen to Welsh Government because they go, ‘Oh it’s government, I’m not listening,’ but they might listen to someone like the Chair of the Group or someone on the Group to support those messages as well” [INT4].

Communicating the value of the SG internally was also emphasised. Within the Welsh Government, an interviewee conceded, “we need to be much better at showing to other policy colleagues actually the value of the Group...they [FG] are very skilled individuals, we need to be able to show that actually they can really add value to policy” [INT5]. This links to participants’ calls for a clear, effective and timely feedback loop for all stakeholders. As one participant advised: “Be realistic, make feedback part of the actions, that’s part of your outcome...to feedback and review” [F9].

3.3.8.2. Implementation Plan

The IPs take the overarching Strategy outcomes and set out specific AHW priorities and outcomes. A few participants questioned their relevance to the Strategy, considering the many other AHW related plans and strategies now available. For example, one interviewee shared: “I wonder whether we need them, because I feel a lot that’s in those implementation plans duplicates then the other delivery plans that we’ve got...TB plans, the welfare plans” [INT5]. Many participants wanted a simplified sector-specific communication approach and reduced duplication (with other plans and strategies).

A combination of existing and new sectors/species specific plans were proposed by some as the most effective way to communicate Strategy progress and impact and to facilitate accountability (See Section 3.3.4). Several participants agreed separating IPs by sectors/issues would make it “more digestible for people” [F20]. However, one participant cautioned an overarching view (e.g. Strategy) would be essential to link up these IPs and sectors, particularly for those issues which straddle multiple sectors. Alternatively, one interviewee favoured a ‘light touch’ annual plan to reduce the administrative burden. Delivering a single consistent message on AHW collectively from Ministers, SG and OCVO would be an important IP development. Other participants wanted a regular and concise IP to enhance resilience and flexibility.

Echoing concerns about Framework overreach, some participants cautioned the choice of IP priorities needed to be more realistic and deliverable. As noted in Section 3.1, participants felt the IP could more clearly justify why priorities have been chosen and how outcomes have been measured. In recognising these concerns, one interviewee suggested adopting a theory of change diagram, which could be updated in the IPs, to provide a transparent outcome-based approach.

3.4. Summary

All participants recognised the value of developing a future overarching long-term Strategy. Participants envisioned a Strategy built upon Framework achievements, adding value to current AHW developments and related policy. Many also suggested that reviewing the

Strategy language and inclusivity (of wider stakeholder sectors) and emphasising the broader importance of AHW, could stimulate momentum across stakeholder groups. This included building relationships with other related priority areas (e.g. economic, health, environment, crime) and seeking opportunities for parity with the UK approach to AHW.

The advantages of addressing the perceived imbalance toward farm animal health in the Strategy, SG, IP and priorities were recognised by many participants. These participants were aware the tensions between competing stakeholder priorities and agendas would need to be managed. Providing detail, evidence-based justifications, transparency and feedback in SG communications and wider opportunities for stakeholder engagement were generally suggested to manage stakeholder expectations. The availability of resources was linked by many participants to these tensions.

All participants argued the resources provided (to OCVO, and the future SG) to deliver the Strategy must reflect the ambition of the Strategy. For example, some of the suggested improvements would require additional resources: a dedicated comms person in OCVO, an SG budget, broader SG membership, IT support (e.g. website, email). Resources were also viewed by many participants as part of building resilience into a future Strategy. For example, to traverse changing political and social priorities (e.g. cost of living crisis, environmental decline) and pressures on the sectors (e.g. economic, disease). Focus group participants argued the Strategy needed to be mindful of limited stakeholder resources, especially among some sectors and groups, when planning how to enhance engagement.

While there were different views on the scope, focus and structure of the Strategy document and its implementation, a more sector targeted, evidenced and accessible approach was suggested by participants. Some participants proposed shaping the Strategy document in line with other policies and documents they perceived effectively informed and engaged stakeholders. While the Framework governance model was broadly supported by participants for the Strategy, they also referenced alternative approaches to the FG. While many participants recognised the value of the FG and respected their role in a future SG, structural, membership and communication improvements were proposed. The suggested changes highlighted many participants' desires for a more collaborative, evidence-based and transparent Strategy.

More meaningful partnership and stakeholder engagement was desired by all. To enhance Strategy relevance and reach, stakeholder mapping was advocated by most participants. A stakeholder database was supported as part of this and to enhance the communication strategy. Knowing the various Strategy audiences and what stimulates them could enhance engagement. Many participants felt stakeholder engagement would be improved with more meaningful opportunities for communication with the Strategy governance team. While the use of contemporary IT and communication tools were strongly supported, participants also wanted face-to-face and broader stakeholder engagements.

It is notable that many of the suggested improvements for the Strategy were previously planned to be part of the Framework (e.g. the need for robust monitoring, evaluation and evidence-based decision-making, stakeholder database, evidence cards, FG transparency).

This supports participants' calls for a robust implementation and delivery plan and related sources.

4. Conclusion

This report details the findings from research aiming to review and evaluate the [Wales Animal Health and Welfare \(AHW\) Framework \(Framework\) \(2014\)](#) and make recommendations for its future iteration as a WAHW Strategy. The Framework provided a 10-year (2014 to 2024) overarching plan aimed at improving AHW standards for all kept animals across Wales, through collaboration, collective ownership and an evidence-based approach. This aim is supported by 4 key mechanisms:

- Framework Monitoring Team
- independent expert Framework Group (FG)
- implementation plans (IP)
- partnership and stakeholder collaboration

The Framework supports the Welsh Government goals of a 'One Health, One Welfare and One Wales' approach to AHW and sustainable environmental practices. This approach acknowledges the complex interconnectedness and mutual dependence of animals, communities, and our shared environment. The research findings support the Framework premise that the Welsh Government cannot address these challenges alone. The Framework is reliant on voluntary engagement and partnership work with an extensive range of AHW stakeholders and sectors and Government departments.

The research shows that alongside key policy opportunities and developments during the Framework period (2014 to 2024), the Welsh AHW sector has experienced national and international social, economic and environmental challenges. Addressing these complex issues has presented significant challenges. As emphasised in the Framework, effective solutions require principles rooted in robust evidence-base, cross-departmental collaboration, multi-agency partnerships and stakeholder engagement, outcome monitoring and evaluation.

This process evaluation has occurred at the end of the Framework period, informed by key stakeholders and actively supported by the Welsh Government OCVO management and implementation team. The Framework review and evaluation was informed by a primarily qualitative mixed method research strategy involving 4 stages of data collection. This included a scoping review, document analysis and interviews, focus groups and a qualitative questionnaire. In total 40 AHW stakeholders participated in the research. The study was not intended to be representative of the AHW sector; rather, it provides views from a wide range of stakeholders and sectors. However, there are limitations in the study including: gaps in some key stakeholder sectors (e.g. the public, enforcement agencies, SEMs, those responsible for wildlife and other kept animal owners), the small sample sizes (e.g. scholarly literature, focus group and questionnaire respondents) and participant self-selection bias (see Section 2.7).

The research findings have highlighted the successes and limitations of the Framework, how the Framework aligns with other policies and recommendations for a future Strategy. While the participants and documents highlighted strengths in the Framework and its implementation, there were also commonly identified areas of weakness which raised concerns. All participants recognised the importance of developing a AHW Strategy. By drawing on their observations of the Framework and work in the AHW sector, they have provided clarity on their needs as stakeholders and offered suggestions for a future Strategy. This section breaks down the key overlapping themes and areas for consideration in the Strategy. In section 5 these are presented as recommendations for the Welsh Government.

4.1. Relevance of the principles, outcomes and timeframe

Participants broadly affirmed that the Framework's long-term vision and principles of collaboration, shared responsibility and evidence-based decision-making, remain highly valuable. These principles have, according to participants, supported notable advances in Wales in areas such as TB (Bovine Tuberculosis) and BVD (Bovine viral diarrhoea) eradication, as well as early work on antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Many participants felt that the framework has underpinned AHW progress and helped to forge a collective sense of purpose among some stakeholder and partners.

All participants recognised the value of developing a future long-term overarching Strategy, built upon Framework achievements and adding value to current AHW developments and related policies. While the suggested duration of the Strategy varied, broadly participants supported a 10-year period. Participants suggested possible improvements to the Strategy principles and outcomes. These included emphasis on enforcement, clarity on roles and responsibilities, robust monitoring and evidence base and an outcome-based approach. They also proposed additions, such as raising AHW awareness among stakeholders (e.g. education and training). To enhance Strategy engagement, participants also suggested clarity on its intended audience and focus, updated language to reflect AHW developments and sector-specific focus. Participants favoured the dual structure of an overarching Strategy accompanied by more detailed (sector-specific) IPs.

Overall, a number of UK and Welsh Government plans, strategies and policies intersect and complement the Framework's guiding principles and its associated priorities. These policies create continuity by forming coherence around ambitions like 'One Health', 'One Welfare' and the promotion of partnership working. More targeted plans later address areas that participants noted as under-developed in the Framework, such as sustainable practice and environmental protection and animal welfare and sentience. While there is clear synergy with the Framework, other Welsh Government strategies have successfully employed tools such as theories of change, explicit performance indicators and time-bound targets to strengthen monitoring and evaluation. Drawing on these approaches could offer useful models for a future Strategy, whether by embedding them directly or by signposting to associated delivery plans.

4.2. The governance architecture

The Framework governance approach of a well-integrated secretariat as part of the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer (OCVO) Monitoring Team and supporting an independent Framework Group (FG), was generally supported by participants. The FG was said by some to function as a vital conduit between Welsh Government and stakeholders. Research participants appreciated the value of their expertise, critical scrutiny and collaborative support. However, many also challenged the group's sector representation, transparency and their role in FG accountability due to the ambiguity of their role and status.

Participants proposed alternative Strategy Group (SG) structures aimed at widening sector representation and group expertise. For example, a small SG which sits above specialist (permanent or temporary) subgroups could provide the scope, flexibility and increased outcomes desired by most participants. Holding the Welsh Government and partners to account and driving stakeholder engagement was argued to be central to a future SG role. To achieve this, participants argued the status, visibility and resourcing of the SG needed to be reviewed.

4.3. Communication and feedback mechanisms

Although the original Framework envisaged a transparent and inclusive communication strategy, its implementation has been irregular (e.g. IPs, stakeholder database, FG minutes). Overall, participants indicated that clearer, sector targeted messaging, better feedback loops and simplified document formats could help restore visibility and reinforce stakeholder trust. For many participants, the need to develop meaningful communication with a broader range of stakeholders and sectors was a priority. They suggested a communication plan which reflected the diversity of stakeholders and sectors was necessary.

Several of the analysed policy documents highlight mechanisms for public and stakeholder engagement, through education campaigns, professional training and awareness raising initiatives, that the Framework itself does not fully explore. Some participants noted this limitation, suggesting a future Strategy might usefully commit to best practice standards in these areas, thereby fostering greater stakeholder responsibility and compliance.

For a future Strategy, participants generally supported a concise high-level strategy, with sector specific detail (e.g. outcomes) communicated through focused plans and aligned with other Welsh Government policies. This approach was expected to increase coherence and avoid duplication. Other participants proposed a more robust Strategy document which would directly address the noted detail gaps (e.g. monitoring, measured outcomes).

Whichever approach is adopted, participants were united in wanting clearer communication on how the outcomes will be measured and achieved. The 'enforcing standards effectively' Framework principle was used by participants to evidence this limitation. Neither the Framework nor the IP articulate how enforcement will be implemented. A clearer framing in the Strategy could encourage the adoption of specific enforcement pathways and roles, and

the allocation of dedicated funding to ensure that compliance is both achievable and measurable.

A renewed emphasis on online support tools, regular progress updates and defined accountability mechanisms were also proposed to further strengthen stakeholder buy in and the Strategy's overall adaptability. In general, participants called for a multi-tiered and targeted Strategy communication plan with a purposeful and timely feedback loop to manage stakeholder expectations and provide transparency.

4.4. Priorities, resourcing and momentum

While most participants recognised a sector and species imbalance in the Framework, they also understood that not all sectors and issues can be prioritised. To address this disparity, participants called for greater clarity and transparency in setting Strategy priorities. This links to the gap noted in the data and evidence to support these decisions. The Framework data development agenda intended to identify existing reliable data, commission new data and invite interested parties to gather data to inform an evidence-based approach.

However, many participants questioned the strength of the evidence base and it was not possible to establish how robust the evidence base was from the data collected in this project. In general, participants understood they needed to unite behind defined and achievable priorities; however, the process and evidence for achieving this required further consideration.

Despite Framework achievements, there was a consistent sense among participants that the Framework's broad remit had exceeded the resources available. Reductions in staffing and budget, worsened by external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, appear to have constrained delivery, weakened communication channels and eroded feedback loops. As a result, some participants noted a slowing of momentum, unclear accountability for outputs, and a scarcity of tangible, measurable outcomes. Participants also highlighted that some stakeholders may lack the resources to engage with the Strategy, while others could help provide resources (e.g. data, research, personnel).

Many of the enhancements to Strategy communication and engagement suggested by participants (such as dedicated communication resources, greater transparency in setting priorities and measurement of outcomes, stakeholder mapping), echo elements already envisaged in the Framework's original design. A few participants argued that ensuring these commitments are resourced in line with the Strategy's ambition could help translate high-level intentions into effective delivery on the ground. Alternatively, other participants suggested it may be helpful to consider aligning ambitions more closely with the available resourcing, so that intended outcomes can be matched by clear, feasible priorities and workplans.

4.5. Representation and engagement

Participants noted the farm animal health sectors have benefited most visibly in the Framework. They argued engagement beyond these areas, particularly among companion

animal and hobby animal owners, enforcement agencies, aquatic and exotic animal professionals and SMEs was limited. Participants acknowledged the challenges of identifying and engaging the underrepresented AHW stakeholders (e.g. disperse sector group, lack of associations or networks, devolved administration and cross border differences).

To address these gaps in the Strategy, participants pointed to more tailored engagement mechanisms, such as sector specific liaison roles or subgroups and stakeholder mapping through a living stakeholder database. More generally, participants argued the imbalance in sector representation needs to be addressed across the Strategy, through the language, focus and categorisation used, choice of priorities, and SG membership. Many emphasised that all stakeholders must feel included and influential in Strategy delivery to meet 2 of the building blocks of the Framework: 'working in partnership' and engendering 'collective ownership'. Without attending to these limitations, the Framework risks waning relevance and impact in the AHW sector.

5. Recommendations

This section outlines the key report recommendations based on the research findings. Further detail on each of the recommendations can be found in the Findings section. The recommendations focus on the future Strategy, using 4 key themes: Strategy principles, outcomes and scope, Strategy governance, Strategy communication and engagement and Strategy data and evidence. They are directed towards the Welsh Government and OCVO, unless stated otherwise.

5.1. Strategy principles, outcomes and scope

Consideration should be given to:

- Adopting a long-term AHW Strategy, using the [Animal Health and Welfare \(AHW\) Framework \(2014 to 2024\)](#) (Framework) as a template for developing the principles and outcomes. The Welsh Government could consider adopting a 10-year duration to maintain momentum in addressing AHW.
- Adopting one of the following options for the Strategy document, and in doing so review the resources available for each option:
 1. A short keystone Strategy document, which clearly signposts stakeholders to broader AHW developments and detailed plans. This document should provide clarity on principles, outcomes and governance roles and responsibilities, and signpost to the detail on tangible outcomes, timescale and measurement and monitoring in the Plans. A dedicated and accessible webpage would be required to support effective signposting of the detailed Plans.
 2. A standalone detailed Strategy document which includes comprehensive information and clarity on the principles, outcomes, roles and responsibilities, how tangible outcomes will be measured and monitored and the timeframe for delivery. Consideration would need to be given to the accessibility of this larger document for the different stakeholder audiences.
- Embedding the language of climate change, sustainability and animal sentience in the AHW Strategy.
- The different needs of stakeholders and sectors in developing the Strategy to enhance engagement and the relevance of the Strategy. For example, a more detailed Strategy document may need to be divided into sections relevant to the different AHW sectors or issues.
- Increasing stakeholder awareness of AHW issues and responses by adding a Strategy outcome which focuses on enhancing education and training. This would fit with the principle 'prevention is better than cure'.
- Addressing the animal species and sectors imbalance in the Framework by considering the Strategy language used and the priorities, stakeholders and outcomes identified.

- Providing clarity within the Strategy (or detailed Plans) on:
 1. the key agencies and partners who have roles and responsibilities in delivering AHW, and where appropriate link them to the outcomes.
 2. the process for setting annual AHW priorities and embedding transparency in this process to manage stakeholder expectations. Importantly, the Strategy (through implementation plans or other document) should demonstrate through a robust evidence-base why these priorities have been chosen and that broader AHW issues had been considered.
 3. the funding and resources available from the Welsh Government and partners to meet the Strategy vision and implementation.
- Using the Strategy launch as a platform to reaffirm the importance and widespread relevance of AHW to internal and external partners and stakeholders and consider embedding this aim in the Strategy communications plan.
- Building resilience into the Strategy so it can adapt to potential policy, economic, environmental and social changes. For example, the Welsh Government could consider if the principles, strategic outcomes and the scope of kept animal categories should be reduced or resources increased to manage future challenges.
- Enhancing mechanisms for enforcement of standards. This could include effective engagement with key enforcement agencies as part of the Strategy and implementation plans.
- Reviewing the mechanisms used in other Welsh Government plans, strategies and policies for setting tangible outcomes and measurable indicators and targets and consider employing one of these approaches in the Strategy.
- Reclassifying the kept animal categories listed in the Framework to make the Strategy more inclusive of AHW stakeholders. For example, the contexts in which animals are kept by humans have changed over the course of the Framework (e.g. hobby keepers, private exotic animal owners). The current categorisation may ignore or appear to exclude these species and sectors, and thereby sector engagement with the Strategy.

5.2. Strategy governance

Consideration should be given to:

- Retaining the current Framework governance structure and resourcing a strengthened secretariat to support an expert Strategy group (SG) and stakeholder communications and engagement.
- Retaining and expanding the expert group (e.g. SG) to ensure greater sector representation and engagement. The Strategy could retain the current FG group model and expand membership, or maintain a small SG who would link to existing

and new specialist subgroups. The development of permanent and or temporary subgroups to support the scope of AHW issues and sectors may be useful. Temporary (task and finish) subgroups may be more cost-effective for more periphery and unexpected AHW issues. The expert group ToR, scope of responsibilities and required resources would need to be reviewed considering the above changes.

- Evaluating the resources required to support the Governance structure in meeting the scope of the Strategy. Resources may include additional SG members, increasing the number of days for which remuneration is paid to SG members, and enhancing secretariat support, communications and IT capacity and support.
- Enhancing the status of the SG to ensure visibility, impact and accountability. This could include setting the annual SG meetings with the Cabinet Secretary as a Strategy requirement.
- Embedding a clear and prompt feedback loop between all actors (Welsh Government – OCVO – SG – Partners – Stakeholders). This may be facilitated with technology which can support the feedback loop (e.g. bespoke website, email list, social media).

5.3. Strategy communication and engagement

Consideration should be given to:

- Reviewing how best to communicate Strategy priorities and outcomes to stakeholders. For example, by mapping out how existing plans can be used to support Strategy delivery (see Section 5.4 below) and how to effectively signpost stakeholders to this information. Thereafter, developing sector/issue-specific IPs for the priority AHW areas not currently covered elsewhere could provide more meaningful and relevant sector communication. However, parity is required across sectors/issues, which means the frequency and format of the IPs would need to be reviewed. Close collaboration with other Welsh Government departments is also necessary to develop a coherent approach to developing and communicating AHW related IPs. A robust online platform (e.g. website) would facilitate accessibility and provide coherence between the Strategy, IPs and other Plans. This approach would complement the keystone Strategy option proposed (see Section 5.1).
- Revisiting the Framework stakeholder database, whereby stakeholders are invited to register their interest in being part of the Strategy. This process could provide a tool for conducting stakeholder mapping, which would be valuable for identifying and reaching out to underrepresented and peripheral AHW sectors. The existing AHW networks and partners should be considered an important support in raising awareness and interest from a broader stakeholder audience. The resources necessary for effectively managing the database would need to be evaluated, alongside how to manage dispersed sectors, such as companion animal owners.

- The Strategy communications plan, so that it meets the needs and the resources available to the Welsh Government, SG and the various sectors and stakeholders (including the public). This could include reviewing the frequency and format of IPs, and the effective signposting of stakeholders to existing resources. A multi-tiered and sector targeted communication approach would be beneficial, based on understanding the characteristics and needs of the various stakeholders (e.g. bespoke website, social media engagement, emailing list, sector events, sector stakeholder (meeting) days, key gatekeepers). Consideration should also be given to stakeholder resources and how this may limit their engagement with the Strategy, and to the resources available to OCVO to facilitate and sustain the communication plan.
- Fostering greater responsibility and compliance with AHW requirements and best practice among stakeholders. This could include new opportunities for stakeholder engagement in developing the Strategy and/or annual priorities (such as roundtables, focus groups, call for feedback, awareness raising).

5.4. Strategy data and evidence

Consideration should be given to:

- Evaluating how the complex interplay of factors which influence AHW have changed since the development of the Framework by conducting a PESTLE ^[Footnote 24] analysis of the wider AHW environment. This would support evidence-based policy development and strategic planning, though considering the political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors which influence the AHW sector. PESTLE analysis would help OCVO anticipate challenges (including financial sustainability), which could improve resilience and responsiveness to emerging risks and help align the Strategy with existing national plans and policies. This process would support some of the recommendations outlined in 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3. For example, PESTLE analysis could build on this project's findings on the policies and plans which align and intersect with the Framework and AHW priorities. This data can be used to identify sector gaps and the AHW sectors and issues already adequately monitored and how these existing plans can be used to support Strategy delivery and stakeholder communication. Establishing an intersectoral working group to inform the PESTLE analysis is highly recommended due to the complex and cross-cutting nature of AHW.

Footnote

[24] PESTLE analysis is a strategic tool used to identify and evaluate the external macro factors that can impact an organisation or sector. It stands for Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental factors. By understanding each of these factors the framework facilitates strategic planning and risk management. The Welsh Government has applied PESTLE analysis in various contexts (e.g. Biodiversity Targets Advisory Panel meetings, [Welsh Government 2025](#)).

- Conducting a data scoping exercise to help identify the data and evidence available on AHW in Wales. This would help to identify the existing AHW evidence base, the data gaps and opportunities for supporting AHW priorities. It would also clarify which departments, agencies, data systems and processes would be in the AHW scope. The process could involve 2 steps:
 1. Scoping primary sources of AHW data and evidence available within the Welsh Government, among statutory agencies (e.g. police, local authorities, Animal Plant and Health) and key partners and in peer reviewed published research.
 2. Scoping trusted AHW data and evidence available from stakeholders and the feasibility of sharing this data with the Welsh Government (this could, for example, be included as part of the stakeholder mapping exercise).
- Conducting a structured data mapping exercise based on the data scoping exercise which would document data flows and action the collection of AHW data. This process could facilitate priority setting, outcome monitoring, evidence impact and inform the resources required to fulfil the Strategy vision. The exercise could set out data sources and formats, data access and sharing mechanisms, data stewardship and retention for trusted AHW data, first internally and then externally should OCVO resources facilitate this. This process would improve data transparency and stakeholder accountability, which would be in line with the principles of working in partnership and sharing the cost of responding to AHW.

6. References

- Bowen, G (2009), '[Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method](#)', Qualitative Research Journal, Volume 9, issue 2, pages 27 to 40
- Braun, V and Clarke, V (2021), 'Thematic analysis: a practical guide', London: Sage
- British Veterinary Association (2014a), '[Proposals for a new animal health and welfare framework in Wales](#)', News and Reports, Veterinary Record, Volume 174, issue 10, page 107
- British Veterinary Association (2014b), '[Minister launches new animal health and welfare framework for Wales](#)', News and Reports, Veterinary Record, Volume 175, issue 5, page 107
- British Veterinary Association (2016). '[Taking animal health and welfare forward in Wales](#)'. News and Reports. Veterinary Record, Volume 179, issue 7, pages 157 to 158
- British Veterinary Association (2017), '[Wales launches voluntary BVD screening programme in bid to eradicate disease](#)', News and Reports, Veterinary Record, Volume 181, issue 10, page 252
- Charities Aid Foundation (2022), '[Animal welfare is the UK's most popular cause for donating to charities](#)'
- Clear Impact (n/d), [Implementation Guide Results-Based Accountability](#)
- Copes, H and Miller, M (2015), 'The Routledge Handbook of Qualitative Criminology'. London: Routledge
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2004), '[Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain](#)'
- Hunter, A and Brewer, J (2016), '[Designing Multimethod Research](#)', in Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, S and Burke Johnson, R (2015). 'The Oxford Handbook of Multimethod and Mixed Methods Research Inquiry'. Oxford Library of Psychology
- Maher, J and Wyatt, T (2019), '[Rural-urban dynamics in the UK illegal puppy trade: Trafficking and trade in 'man's best friend'](#)', International Journal of Rural Law and Policy, Volume 9, issue 2, pages 62 to 66
- Metropolitan Police (2018), '[FOI data published by the Metropolitan Police for dogs who are out of control between January 2018 and May 2023](#)'
- Morse, JM and others (2002), '[Verification Strategies for Establishing Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research](#)', International Journal of Qualitative Methods, Volume 1, issue 2, pages 13 to 22
- NFU Mutual (2024), '[UK cost of livestock worrying rises by nearly 30%](#)'.

Noebels, M and others (2021), '[Senedd Research: Biodiversity](#)'

[One Health High Level Expert Panel](#) (2021), '[Tripartite and UNEP support OHHLEP's definition of "One Health"](#)'

One Welfare World (2025), '[About One Welfare - One Welfare](#)'

Rahman, T and others (2020), '[Zoonotic Diseases: Etiology, Impact and Control](#)', Microorganisms, Volume 8, issue 9, page 1405

RSPCA (2022), '[Facts, figures and myth-busting](#)'

RSPCA (2023), '[The Animal Kindness Index](#)'

Scott, A. and others (2004), '[Impact of the 2001 foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in Britain: implications for rural studies](#)'. Journal of Rural Studies, Volume 20, pages 1 to 14

Tulloch, JSP and others (2023), '[Dog-related deaths registered in England and Wales from 2001 to 2021](#)', Public Health, Volume 215, pages 91 to 93

United Nations (2021), '[Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit Report: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland](#)', United Nations

HM Treasury (2020), '[Magenta Book – Guidance notes for policy evaluation and analysis](#)'

Welsh Government (2023), '[All-Wales Wildlife and Rural Crime Coordination Programme – Theory of Change Report](#)'

Welsh Government (2024), '[Written Statement: Farming in Wales](#)'.

Welsh Government (2025), '[Welsh Government Biodiversity Targets Advisory Panel meeting: 6 March 2025](#)'

7. Appendices

Annex A: Scoping review keywords

Search Engines: Findit, Google Scholar, Research Rabbit.

Parameters: peer-reviewed sources within the past 11 years

Search Terms: a combination of Wales animal health and welfare framework, animal health and welfare framework, animal health and welfare, AHW, framework evaluation, Welsh Government, animal health, animal welfare, one health, one welfare. Framework group, implementation plan, Framework Monitoring Team, OCVO.

Annex B: List of documents analysed

- Agriculture (Wales) Act 2023
- Animal Health and Welfare Framework - Evidence Paper from Policy Workshops held in 2022 (unpublished)
- Animal Welfare (Kept animal) Bill
- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Animal Welfare Plan Wales 2021 to 26
- Animal Welfare Plan Wales Year 1 Progress Report
- Animal Welfare Plan Wales Year 2 Progress Report
- Antimicrobial Resistance in Animals and the Environment Five Year Implementation Plan for Wales 2019 to 2024
- Contingency Plan for Exotic Notifiable Diseases of Animals 2018
- Defra Healthy Bees Plan 2030
- Framework membership call for applications
- Health Bees Plan 2030
- Programme for Government 2021 to 2026
- Rural Development Programme Document 2014 to 2020
- Sustainable Farming Scheme 2024
- Towards sustainable growth: An Action Plan for the Food and Drink Industry 2014 to 2020
- Wales TB Eradication Programme Delivery Plan March 2023 to March 2028
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Annex C: Semi-structured interviews topic guide

This is a simplified version of the topic guide used in the semi-structured interviews.

Detailed topic guides were used and amended throughout the process to reflect the data previously collected and new areas that required further investigation.

- Preamble
- Role and experiences in AHW
- Framework aims, focus relevance and impact
- Framework implementation and delivery (FG, Communication strategy, IP)
- Framework alignment with policies/plans/Strategies
- Future strategy priorities, focus, goals
- Future strategy structure
- Future strategy governance, communication and delivery
- Any further comments
- Ethics and thank you

Annex D: Focus group topic guide

This is a simplified version of the topic guide used in the focus groups. Detailed topic guides were used and amended throughout the process to reflect the data previously collected and new areas that required further investigation.

- Preamble
- Role and experiences in AHW
- Future strategy priorities, focus, goals
- Future strategy structure
- Future strategy governance, communication and delivery
- Framework aims, focus relevance and impact
- Framework implementation and delivery [FG, Communication strategy, IP]
- Framework alignment with policies/plans/Strategies
- Any further comments
- Ethics and thank you

Annex E: Online questionnaire

About you

1. How would you describe your role with regards to Animal Health and Welfare [AHW]?
[please select more than one if applicable]
 - I work in a Welsh Government department
 - I am an existing or previous member of the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group
 - I work in partnership with the Welsh Government/I am a stakeholder in Animal Health and Welfare in Wales [Please briefly explain your role]
2. With which sector(s) do you identify? [please select more than one if applicable]
 - Farming [Land]
 - Aquaculture/aquafarming
 - Veterinary
 - Non-companion Kept animal [Note this includes working animals, sport animals, show animals and exhibition animals]
 - Companion animal industry [commercial] [Note this includes owners, retailers, service providers, rescues]
 - Companion animal owner [non-commercial]
 - Other [please specify]
3. Does the [AHW Framework](#) apply to your role/organisation? [please briefly explain how]
4. How would you briefly summarise the purpose of the AHW Framework?

Animal Health and Welfare [AHW] Standards in Wales

5. To what extent do you agree with the following statements [please choose one for each statement]:
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
 - Don't know
- a. The [AHW Implementation Plan 2022 to 24](#) captures what you consider to be the current key animal health and welfare priorities in Wales
 - i. If you disagree, which priorities regarding AHW in Wales do you think a future strategy should address?
- b. The AHW Framework has been effective in Wales in: [yes/no]
 - i. Ensuring that animals are healthy

- ii. Ensuring that animals are productive
- iii. Ensuring animals have a good quality of life
- iv. Enhancing public confidence in the way food is produced
- v. Enhancing public confidence that public health is protected
- vi. Supporting a thriving rural economy
- vii. Maintaining a high-quality [wider natural] environment
- viii. Facilitating partnership work in AHW
- ix. Clarifying stakeholder roles and responsibilities in AHW
- x. Providing a better understanding of the costs and benefits of AHW interventions
- xi. Delivering and enforcing standards in AHW
- xii. Developing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework
- xiii. Delivering on a “One Health, One Welfare” approach [see [Wales Animal Health Welfare Implementation Plan](#)]

6. Which of these statements best describes the balance of the delivery in the Framework?
[please choose one]

- Completely focused on animal health
- Mostly focused on animal health with less focus on animal welfare
- Equal focus on both animal health and animal welfare
- Mostly focus on animal welfare with less focus on animal health
- Completely focused on animal welfare
- Don't know

Communication of the Animal Health and Welfare [AHW] Framework

7. To what extent do you agree with the following statements [please choose one for each statement]:

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Don't know

- a. The [AHW Implementation Plans](#) have been helpful in communicating the focus of the Framework
- b. The AHW Implementation Plans have been helpful in communicating the progress of the Framework
- c. Overall, the progress of the Framework has been communicated in an appropriate way

8. How should a future strategy be communicated?

Animal Health and Welfare [AHW] Framework Group

9. To what extent do you agree with the following statements [please choose one for each statement]:
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
 - Don't know
- a. The [AHW Framework Group](#) is made up of the most appropriate members [e.g. providing coverage of sector and skillset]. Why do you say this?
- b. The AHW Framework Group have effectively supported the implementation of the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework". Why do you say this?
- c. The AHWF Group have effectively performed their roles as stipulated by their [Terms of Reference](#) and the [Implementation Plan 2022 to 24](#). Why do you say this?

Animal Health and Welfare [AHW] Framework Engagement of Stakeholders

10. A key principle of the AHW Framework is the importance of 'working in partnership', 'including partners understanding and accepting roles and responsibilities'. To what extent do you agree with the following statements [please choose one for each statement]:
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
 - Don't know
- a. The AHW Framework has engaged the most appropriate stakeholders [[see AHW Framework no.16](#)] in Animal Health and Welfare in Wales
- b. The AHW Framework Group has engaged with stakeholders effectively.
11. How could engagement be improved with a future strategy?

Alignment of the AHW Framework with Existing or Forthcoming WG Plans and Strategies

12. With which of the following WG plans/strategies does the AHW Framework currently align [please select all that you feel align]:
- The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015
 - Animal Welfare Act 2006
 - Animal Welfare Plan for Wales (2021 to 2026)

- Bovine TB Eradication Programme
- Animal and Environment Antimicrobial Resistance Plan
- The Welsh Government's Contingency Plan for Exotic Notifiable Diseases of Animals
- Implementation Plan for the Healthy Bees Plan 2030
- The Sustainable Farming Scheme
- Other [name as many as applicable]

13. Are there any important aspects of AHW that are not covered in the Framework or other existing or forthcoming policies or plans? [Yes/No]

a. If yes, please specify

A Future Animal Health and Welfare Strategy

14. Is a future AHW Strategy required? Yes/no

a. If No: How would you like to see AHW priorities addressed in the future?

b. If yes - Why?

15. Which of the following aspects are important for addressing AHW priorities (please tick all that apply):

- a. An AHW Framework Group
- b. An AHW Framework Monitoring Team
- c. Annual Implementation Plan
- d. A focus on the current set categories of animals [farmed livestock, companion animals, working animals, kept animals involved in sport, aquaculture and wildlife 'where our actions affect their health and welfare or where there is a risk of wildlife transmitting disease to other animals or humans']
- e. The [principle](#) of Promoting prevention and the benefit of good animal health and welfare
- f. The principle of Facilitating partnership work in AHW
- g. The principle of Clarifying stakeholder roles and responsibilities in AHW
- h. The principle of Providing a better understanding of the costs and benefits of AHW interventions
- i. The principle of Delivering and enforcing standards in AHW
- j. The [intended strategic outcome](#) of Helping Wales deliver healthy and productive animals
- k. The intended strategic outcome of Ensuring animals have a good quality of life in Wales
- l. The intended strategic outcome of Enhancing confidence in the way food is produced and public health is protected
- m. The intended strategic outcome of Supporting a thriving rural economy

- n. The intended strategic outcome of Maintaining a high-quality environment across the nation
- o. A '[One Heath, One Welfare, One Wales](#)' approach
- p. An effective biosecurity plan
- q. Working collaboratively with the UK and devolved Governments
- r. Any other elements of the AHW Framework not covered above

16. Is there anything else you would like to see included in a future AHW Strategy? [Yes/No]

- a. If yes, which additional aspects should be included in a Future Animal Health and Welfare Strategy?

17. For how many years should a new Strategy be in place? [please choose no of years]

Anything else that you would like to add

18. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about the current Framework or a future Strategy that has not been covered in this questionnaire? [yes/no]

- a. If yes, please specify

Piloting and feedback on questionnaire [for Framework Group & WG only]

You have been selected to take part in the pilot phase of the survey. This means that this questionnaire could be amended based on your feedback, along with that of other participants selected for the pilot phase. The data gathered during the pilot phase will be regarded with the same importance as the data gathered in the main phase.

19. Have you experienced any problems in completing the questionnaire or do you have any other feedback on it? [yes/no]

- a. If yes, please explain any problems you have experienced in completing the questionnaire and/or enter any other feedback here.

Annex F: Social Media Groups accessed to recruit members of the public

- Trearddur Bay/Porth Dafarch
- Mid Wales Local
- Ynys Mon/Anglesey
- What's Happening in Pembrokeshire
- Conwy Notice Board
- North Wales Pets Forum Gogledd Cymru
- Hay on Wye Community Notice Board
- Welshpool Community Melting Pot
- Pet Related Businesses in South Wales
- Mid Wales Local
- All Things Community in Wales
- Lost and Found Animals Cardiff and South Wales
- Dog Owners Club Wales
- Wrexham Notice Board
- Newport and Surrounding Areas Community Group
- Community News Cardiff

Annex G: Key plans, strategies and policy

The following summary outlines how the Framework AHW priorities align and overlap with key documents.

The [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#) establishes legal duties for the humane treatment of all kept animals across the UK. It sets out what constitutes acceptable care by defining key welfare needs and by imposing offenses for causing unnecessary suffering. Although the Act's primary focus is on protecting individual animals, its provisions underpin standards that support healthy, productive livestock, public confidence in food production, rural prosperity and, indirectly, environmental quality. The Animal Welfare Act 2006 supports the [Framework](#) by providing the legal basis for enforcing animal welfare standards: ranging from proactive treatment and assignment of carers responsibilities to strict prohibitions on unnecessary suffering. By ensuring that animals are kept healthy and productive, treated humanely and held to high welfare standards through enforceable legal measures, the Act indirectly reinforces public confidence in food production, supports the rural economy and contributes to a sustainable environment. Conversely, the guiding Framework principles of prevention, responsibility, partnership, economic rationale and effective enforcement are integral to the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

The Animal Welfare Act clearly aligns with the AHW priorities detailed in the [Implementation Plan \(IP\) 2022 to 24](#) on animal welfare and responsible ownership. Both the [Act \(12.2.b\)](#) and the Framework emphasise the importance of co-ordination; however, neither outline specific strategies or plans to operationalise this collaboration. In contrast to the Framework, the [Act \(10.12.2c\)](#) emphasises the importance of education and awareness to improve animal welfare standards. This was highlighted by some participants as an additional focus for a future Strategy (see Section 3.3).

The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) creates a framework that requires public bodies to work toward sustainable economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in Wales. This Act does not focus solely on animals. However, by mandating long-term planning, transparency (reporting), intergenerational equity and emphasising partnership, prevention and balanced decision-making, it provides a solid foundation to support initiatives aimed at maintaining high AHW standards, safeguarding food production, supporting rural communities and protecting the environment. The Act is a broad piece of legislation focused on sustainable development and public wellbeing; its principles and requirements provide essential support to Framework principles and support many of the [Framework](#) AHW priorities ([IP 2022 to 2024](#)). Sustainable practices, wellbeing goals, the 'One Health' approach and stakeholder collaboration and engagement are key aims of both the Framework and this Act ([see S5.2.b/c/dm, 25 and 48](#)). These shared goals and guiding principles ensure that public bodies in Wales work not only to improve human wellbeing but also to support AHW ([see PART 1 and 2, pages 1 to 8](#)). According to one interviewee, the Framework and this Act were developed simultaneously and modelled on results-based accountability. This Act outlines the need for annual indicators using qualitative or quantitative measures ([see 10.2.a](#)) and future trends reports. Some participants argued the Framework and future Strategy required more specific targets and metrics to measure progress effectively. To some extent this is addressed in the IPs, for example [IP 2022 to](#)

[2024](#) sets out the actions and outcomes relating to the key AHW priorities, such as One Health, One Welfare and biosecurity.

The [Programme for Government \(PfG\) 2021 to 2026: Well-being Statement \(2021\)](#) set out Welsh Government strategic commitments and wellbeing goals, including enhancing AHW. It summarizes the key measures that support the overall goals of AHW. The recommendations are grouped by specific goals and guiding principles and outline a comprehensive suite of actions that support the [Framework](#) and key [AHW priorities](#). Where the Framework notes the need for ‘healthier animals who live a good life’, the PfG provides 4 detailed Welsh Government commitments to achieve this, ranging from regulatory reforms (such as establishing animal welfare registration and mandating CCTV in slaughterhouses) to improved enforcement training, sustainable environmental initiatives (including woodland expansion and bans on single-use plastics) and robust support systems for family farms. The focus on sustainable development and farming practices and ‘One Health’ is a common thread in the [PfG](#), [Framework](#) and [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#). While the PfG provides specific targets, as noted above, according to participants, the Framework would benefit from specific targets and metrics and clear delineation of resource allocation and funding to meet the outcomes. That said, as noted in Section 3.1, participants also recognised setting detailed targets and metrics could limit the flexibility of an overarching Framework. One participant argued the importance of PfG goals for companion animal welfare, due to the limited legislation informing this space and noted a future Strategy may be enhanced by incorporating a commitment to addressing relevant PfG goals. Another explained the requirement for Welsh Government departments to provide regular updates on how they are meeting PfG goals, suggesting this could be used to evidence outcomes in a future Strategy.

The [Animal Welfare Plan for Wales 2021 to 26 \(2021\)](#) provides a detailed, long-term strategy to enhance the welfare of all kept animals in Wales. It sets out the tasks and processes for implementing the ambitious [PfG](#), alongside ongoing policy work and cross-government collaborations aimed at achieving goals similar to the 5 Framework guiding principles (see Section 1). Consistent with the [Framework](#), this Plan is underpinned by the guiding principles of prevention, clear role definition, partnership working, cost–benefit balance and effective enforcement. This establishes a solid foundation for achieving the overarching long-term improvements in animal welfare across Wales set out in the Framework and the [IP 2022 to 2024](#). As noted in the Ministerial Foreword, the Plan is integrated and complimentary to the Framework. It does, however, consider a broader range of stakeholders than the Framework:

“our strong and long-standing relationships with the farming industry, Third Sector organisations, Welsh Local Authorities, enforcement agencies, the veterinary profession, scientific communities and our counterparts in the other UK administrations” ([Animal Welfare Plan for Wales \(2021 to 26\), page 3](#)).

The emphasis on promoting education and awareness in the Animal Welfare Plan for Wales partially addresses this gap in the Framework, highlighted by some participants.

The clear thread from Framework to Plan was noted by many participants, as was the benefits of a detailed and comprehensive welfare plan sitting below the strategic vision laid out in the Framework. The Plan follows the Framework approach to monitoring progress (e.g. FG and Progress reports) and provides additional detail in setting specific actions linked to the desired outcomes. Neither provide clarity on the resources available to meet these outcomes, a consideration some participants wanted to see in a future Strategy.

The Animal Welfare Plan for Wales Progress Reports ([Year One](#) and [Year Two](#)) provide a detailed update on its implementation, including PfG commitments as well as ongoing Wales-based policy work and UK/GB policy collaboration. These reports demonstrate how efforts to improve animal welfare are translated into tangible actions on the ground, thereby evidencing Framework and Plan progress. For example, progress report cited achievements were:

Year 1 Progress Report indicated achievements in:

- establishing a national regulatory model through evidence gathering and stakeholder engagement.
- expansion of the Local Authority Enforcement Project, resulting in improved licensing and enforcement.
- launch of a public consultation on CCTV in slaughterhouses to improve transparency and food safety.
- collaborative work with other administrations on improving standards for farmed animals.
- ongoing review of legislative measures (including the [Animal Welfare \(Kept Animals\) Bill 2023](#)) to drive further reforms.

Year 2 Progress Report indicated achievements in:

- the completion of evidence-gathering to review current legislation and the establishment of a robust framework for animal licensing enforcement.
- expansion of the Animal Licensing Wales project with additional trained enforcement officers.
- successful delivery of multiple training courses for LA officers.
- launch of a 12-week public consultation on the licensing of animal welfare establishments, activities and exhibits.
- legislative progress with the introduction of the [Animal Welfare \(Livestock Exports\) Act 2024](#).
- ongoing collaboration with UK and Scottish counterparts on improving animal welfare during transport.

- hosting a multi-agency summit on Responsible Dog Ownership, with follow-up workshops planned.

Collectively, the Animal Welfare Plan for Wales Plan and Reports support the overarching Framework goals and key AHW priorities, emphasising a 'One Welfare' approach and using the Framework principles of prevention, clear roles, partnership, balanced intervention and robust enforcement.

The [Antimicrobial Resistance in Animals and the Environment: Five-Year Implementation Plan for Wales 2019 to 2024 \(2019\)](#) sets out a comprehensive Welsh Government strategy and roadmap to reduce antimicrobial use in animal production and mitigate antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in the environment, an animal and public health concern. Reduced antibiotics use was achieved through improved infection prevention, responsible antimicrobial use and stewardship, strengthened surveillance, targeted innovation and minimising environmental contamination. This plan aligns with the [UK AMR National Action Plan \(2019\)](#), adopting a 'One Health' and collaborative approach to protect future generations.

The AMR Plan supports with overarching [Framework](#) goals and principles as it is underpinned by the guiding principles of prevention, clear role definition, partnership, cost–benefit analysis and robust enforcement. Notably, one participant argued that the AMR Plan was an example of best practice in terms of developing a cohesive approach and developing a clear thread from UK to National to stakeholder delivery. A few participants noted the importance of seeking opportunities for further UK cohesion in a future Strategy.

The [Healthy Bees Plan 2030: Working together to improve honey bee health and husbandry in England and Wales \(2020\)](#) sits outside the OCVO remit, but provides a framework to safeguard and enhance the health and welfare of pollinators (honeybees) in England and Wales. This is crucial for environmental and agricultural sustainability, food security, a thriving rural economy and bee health. This Plan focuses on reducing colony losses, mitigating pest and disease risks, boosting beekeeping skills and promoting evidence-based management practices. It serves as a blueprint for monitoring and reviewing progress over the next decade, with specific actions and milestones outlined.

The Healthy Bees Plan aligns with the broader goals and guiding principles of the [Framework](#) by protecting the essential ecosystem services provided by a healthy bee population. The Framework commitments to partnership work and co-ordination are emphasised in this [Plan \(page 4\)](#), as are the priorities of research and evidence informed practice and policy. The Healthy Bees Plan addresses the key priorities of resilience and sustainability, 'One Health' and outcomes and evidence-based delivery as noted in the Framework [IP 2022 to 2024](#). It also emphasises education and training provision, which was argued by some participants to be absent in the Framework (e.g. to enhance awareness and behavioural change).

The [Welsh Government Contingency Plan for Exotic Notifiable Diseases of Animals 2018 \(2018\)](#) sets out the processes required to prepare for and respond to an outbreak of an

exotic notifiable animal disease in Wales. It details the measures to detect, contain and eradicate an outbreak swiftly to protect AHW, public health, the rural economy and the environment. This Plan supports [Framework](#) commitments to maintaining high standards of AHW through proactive measures to safeguard biosecurity and deliver One Health and a collaborative approach. It also supports many of the key priorities set out in the [Framework IP 2022 to 2024](#).

The Contingency Plan for Exotic Notifiable Diseases of Animals provides a detailed strategy, including key roles and responsibilities and resources in place for operational groups, groups and committees and partners and stakeholders. Although this level of detail may be unhelpful in a future Strategy, further clarity on responsibilities, stakeholders and resources was desired by many participants.

The [Wales TB Eradication Programme Delivery Plan: March 2023 to March 2028 \(2023\)](#) sets out the enhanced strategy for eradicating bovine TB in Wales by 2041. Addressing this critical animal health and biosecurity issue aligns with the [Framework](#) goals and [IP 2022 to 2024](#) priorities of disease prevention and control/eradication and biosecurity. The TB Eradication Plan provides a detailed framework, which incorporates rigorous targeted testing, regionalisation of interventions, legislative and operational measures such as strict enforcement of biosecurity measures. By lowering TB incidence, this Plan supports the health and productivity of cattle, supports public confidence in food production, protects the rural economy and safeguards the environment. This is achieved through collaboration and a One Health approach, in line with Framework aims and AHW key priorities.

The [Agriculture \(Wales\) Act 2023](#) provides for AHW within its Sustainable Land Management framework, by empowering the Welsh Government to target practices which enhance animal welfare and biosecurity. The amendment on Wildlife ([Part 5](#)), for example, provides support for wild animals who are impacted and kept by humans (e.g. glue traps, bows). This enhances the focus on wild AHW, a focus identified by some participants as needing further attention in the [Framework](#). This Act mandates a monitoring and reporting mechanisms to track sustainable land management objectives, which would include aspects of AHW progress. Many research participants noted limitations in the monitoring and reporting of Framework outcomes, which may be enhanced by the Agriculture (Wales) Act.

The [Sustainable Farming Scheme 2026: scheme description \(2025\)](#), describes the Welsh Government's new agricultural support scheme, commencing 1 January 2026. The outlined Sustainable Farming Scheme encourages practices that support the [Framework](#) through emphasising sustainability through high welfare standards and practices. Co-design has underpinned the development of the Scheme, supporting the Framework principle of collaboration. Like the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), it sets an integrated long-term ambition.

Although the Scheme was still in development during the data collection period with participants, some participants shared their opinion on these developments and the Scheme's compatibility with the Framework. Several participants highlighted the importance of the Scheme and a future Strategy being crosscutting with mutual benefits for stakeholders. Some participants raised concerns about the Scheme not recognising the

importance of AHW, while 2 interviewees indicated they had a role in embedding AHW within the Scheme. Others suggested the Scheme may help develop a different approach to a future Strategy. For example, the import of co-development and the relevance of data in driving the Scheme was highlighted. The [Animal Health Improvement Cycle \(AHIC\)](#) ^[footnote 1], for example, is part of the Universal Actions required by farmers in return for payment by the Scheme. The adoption of models, such as a Theory of Change model, was also noted as a part of the Scheme development by another participant and suggested as an option to support the outcomes and monitoring of a future Strategy. The [‘Sustainable Farming Scheme 2026: scheme description’](#) was published as this report was going to press.

[Towards Sustainable Growth: An Action Plan for the Food and Drink Industry 2014 to 2020 \(2014\)](#) provides a template for sustainable growth and ethical sourcing practices to promote standards of food safety and traceability. It is closely aligned with the [Framework](#) in recognising animal health, disease prevention and farm assurance as key to food quality and thereby public safety. AHW is clearly integrated into the action plan, as is collaboration with the FG and a broader set of partners (in public health, export strategies, food policy). The attention to training and accreditation is also of note as stakeholder education and training was highlighted by some participants as an important outcome for a future Strategy. This Plan reinforces One Health principles and the interconnected nature of AHW, the environment and economic stability.