

The **A S C**

Animals in Science Committee

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9 April 2024

Dear Minister Griffith,

I am writing to you as Chair of the Animals in Science Committee (ASC) regarding the Animal Testing debate in the House of Commons on 19 February 2024.

The ASC would like to express our enthusiasm for the announcements made by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) during this debate. In particular, we welcome the Government ambition to publish a plan to accelerate the development, validation and uptake of technologies and methods to reduce reliance on the use of animals in science. Along with the additional funding for new approach methodologies (NAMs), this commitment is important for delivering DSIT's obligations under section 20B of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to "support the development and validation of alternative strategies". It is also important for compliance with the principle of replacement that is defined within the Act as an obligation that "wherever possible, a scientifically satisfactory method or testing strategy not entailing the use of protected animals must be used instead of a regulated procedure".

Whilst recognising that the scale of the opportunities and investment requirements for scientific development in non-animal alternatives are likely to be significant, we welcome these initial commitments. As we outlined to your predecessor (16 June 2023), this represents an important strategic shift in the "Government seizing the immediate opportunity for the UK to take a lead on the development of NATs [non-animal technologies] and NAMs".

As the committee responsible for providing ministerial advice on the use of protected animals, we would like to offer our support and expertise in considering the increased development, validation and uptake of NAMs. We have recently welcomed new members to the ASC with specific expertise in non-animal alternatives. The ASC Futures Working Group will be taking forward a workstream this year on this topic.

We were also pleased to learn of the reintroduction of the Public Attitudes to Animal Research survey, for which the ASC wrote to you to express our

support on 17 January 2024. The insights gleaned from this survey will be instrumental in tracking the impact and influence of changing policy on public opinion, whilst guiding our collective efforts towards more transparent and accountable research practices. We recognise that the animal testing landscape has changed significantly since the questions in this survey were last reviewed. It is vital to ensure that we balance the need for the survey to remain relevant in this modern context whilst protecting the valuable time series that has already been established to track public attitudes over time. The ASC would like to offer our support in preparing the survey to be relaunched.

In our letter to your predecessor (16 June 2023), we additionally suggested that the government should consider re-locating the animals in science regulation and policy function from the Home Office to DSIT. We have not had a formal response to this suggestion. However, we would welcome the opportunity for direct long-term engagement with yourself and your officials to fully explore the opportunities and challenges for ensuring compliance with the principles of replacement, reduction and refinement. As you described in the House of Commons debate, a cross-government approach is essential to progress these issues.

Our recent ministerial commission from Lord Sharpe (29 February 2024) asks us to work with other government bodies. Specifically, we have been asked to consider how to strengthen leading practice for the regulated sector including “how the science sector, including representative bodies, the National Centre for the 3Rs, and others, can best collaborate to this end.” We, therefore, look forward to working with colleagues from DSIT to fulfil this ambition.

I would be grateful for the opportunity to discuss these matters further and contribute to the ongoing dialogue. The ASC looks forward to the opportunity for meaningful collaboration surrounding the future of animal research in the UK.

Yours sincerely,



Professor David Main
Chair of the Animals in Science Committee