



BY EMAIL

Mr Andrew Muir
DAERA Minister

7 February 2024

Dear Mr Muir

Many congratulations on your recent appointment as Minister for the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. I wish you many constructive and successful years in this important position.

I write on behalf of NIPSA members employed by Councils across NI who undertake important animal welfare activities to seek your help. Animal welfare services were dealt a bitter blow within the past year by the spontaneous withdrawal of critical funding by the Permanent Secretary of DAERA, Katrina Godfrey. I attach your Party's very helpful previous correspondence on this shocking decision which is very welcomed by NIPSA. I wrote to the Permanent Secretary and have attached that correspondence together with her dismissive reply.

It is in this context that I implore you to intervene to reverse the withdrawal of funding decision and to reinstate the in-year funding already withdrawn without any notice of intent to Councils or any consultation whatsoever before the decision to withdraw all funding was taken. Whilst DAERA may be currently underfunded, it is not right that it seeks to protect itself by withdrawing all funding required for Councils to provide the statutory functions provided by dedicated staff across NI which has badly damaged public service provision whilst putting many jobs in jeopardy. NIPSA applauds that the Alliance Party holds a very strong supportive position for DAERA to continue to support financially the protection of the innocent animals who do not have a voice of their own and suffer the most horrendous treatment at the hands of unscrupulous breeders and traders - those who stand only to gain by increasing the animal welfare abuses which underpin their lucrative illegal animal trading activities without fear of consequence.

We know that animal welfare charities are equally concerned and critical of the decision taken by DAERA to withdraw all animal welfare funding and are calling for a reversal of that decision and reinstatement of the in-year funding already withheld from the Councils who are involved in this hitherto successful regional service, leaving them facing further black holes in their budgets. NIPSA seeks your intervention to reverse the decision to cut funding, reinstate the monies already withheld for this year and commit to a fully funded by DAERA protected public service going forward. We would be very pleased to meet with you to discuss further if that would be helpful to you.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Kim Smyth
NIPSA Assistant Secretary