



Job One should be to lose the fake police uniform.

Is the corrupt, incompetent, grifting fraud factory know as the RSPCA going to reform itself under new sane leadership?

It's too early to tell, but there appears to be a glimmer of hope.

The new chief of the RSPCA, Jeremy Cooper, has said the animal welfare charity had become "too adversarial" and will now be "a lot less political".

A number of farmers and pet owners prosecuted or investigated by the RSPCA have accused it of being over-zealous in cases going back years. In 2012, it was criticised for spending £330,000 to privately prosecute a hunt.

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RSPCA denies U-turn on fox-hunting prosecutions and opposition to the badger cull after interview with new boss prompts a backlash

The RSPCA is trying to dispel any suggestion it is going 'soft' on fox-hunting or the badger cull. Philip Bowers reports on an organisation apparently wrestling with internal conflict

A week ago, things could hardly have been clearer. The RSPCA, losing support and credibility for mounting what many saw as increasingly extreme campaigns against farmers and pet owners, was turning over a new leaf.

With a moderate at the helm the organisation apologised for past mistakes and pledged to get back to its roots.

Jeremy Cooper, the new chief executive, said in a major interview with the Daily Telegraph that the charity had made errors, would no longer prosecute cases of alleged illegal hunting, but would pass evidence to public prosecutors.

And on the badger cull Mr Cooper appeared to take a distinctly different tone to his predecessor, Gavin Grant, who had said the charity would 'name and shame' farmers engaged with the cull.

Instead, while falling well short of supporting the Government's efforts to eradicate bovine TB, Mr Cooper conceded badgers had to be 'managed.'

Cue the backlash. A petition demanding newly installed Mr Cooper be sacked was initiated and gathered thousands of signatures.

The Badger Trust's CEO Dominic Dyer contacted the Western Morning News and other media to accuse the RSPCA of going 'soft' and a number of people describing themselves as animal lovers took to social media to condemn what looked like the change of tack by the animal charity. One urged the new boss, Mr Cooper, to 'remember what the 'C' in its title stood for.

In response the RSPCA, wrote to newspapers re-stating its former position on fox hunting and badgers and posted a statement on its website assuring its supporters it had not changed tack at all, it was still 'proud' of spending more than £300,000 prosecuting a member of David Cameron's former Oxfordshire Hunt, the Heythrop, and had not altered its position on the badger cull.

It went on to say that the comments made by Mr Cooper in what it called a 'harmless interview' with the Daily Telegraph were misinterpreted.

On hunting its statement reads: "We have been subject to a sustained attack in recent years by advocates of blood sports. Much of this campaign is visible through the large amount of critical articles about us that have appeared in a small number of newspapers.

And it goes on: "It's a shame that some have chosen to exploit this principled position for their own ends. These are the same people who have criticised us previously saying we did not apologise when mistakes have been made. You are damned if you do and damned if you don't."