

# Go Vegan Scotland Talk – VegFest Scotland - 2016

## *No Baby Steps! -*

### *Clear Vegan Advocacy, What it is and Why it Works*

-----

This is a rough script of the talk we gave at VegFests Scotland, Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2016. The text is in the following colours, corresponding to the speakers:

Barbara Bolton

Stephen Balfour

Yvonne Murdoch

Carol McComskie

#### I. Introduction

1. Some of you will already be familiar with Go Vegan Scotland. For those who are not, we're a group of vegans who wanted to do more to promote veganism in Scotland. We promote it through positive advocacy and information sharing.
2. We're going to give a bit of background to what we do and why, and what we don't do and why not. In doing that we're not intending to criticise anyone else or say they shouldn't be doing what they're doing. We're just explaining what we do and why.

#### II. Why Vegan Advocacy?

3. Why do we spend our time promoting veganism?
4. **Firstly**, because we believe the best thing anyone can do for animals is go vegan. Going vegan covers everything, all animal use, all animal exploitation, all animal killing. If someone makes the connection and goes vegan, they cut all of that out of their life (in so far as possible) – they stop using animals for food, clothes, cosmetics, household goods, entertainment, sport; once you go vegan you stop exploiting animals and all of these things fall into place behind that
5. **Secondly**, because anyone can be vegan. It's something anyone can do, they just need to make a decision and then live by that decision. That's the great thing about veganism. We don't need anyone else to do anything, it's not dependent on big organisations or government or anything else, it's something we can all just do.

6. We acknowledge that there are people who are dependent on others for whom it may be very difficult to live vegan, even in Scotland (children, people unable to make decisions or control things in their lives) but those are the hard cases and the more of us who go vegan, the more the world around us becomes vegan and supportive of veganism, the fewer of those hard cases will exist. So as a general statement, it still stands, anyone can be vegan.
7. I'm assuming most people here are vegan; if you're not vegan please come and speak to us afterwards (all our volunteers are wearing our T-shirts today – slide – and you can find our stall at J6).
8. **Thirdly**, once you go vegan you realise:
  - you should have done it long ago
  - being vegan is the *least* you can do for animals
  - **and**, if someone had told you it was the right thing to do
  - and shown you how easy it was to live vegan, you like to think you would have done it sooner.
9. That's really what GVS is all about. Helping people find veganism and find it more quickly, through positive advocacy and information sharing.
10. We know a lot of vegans feel the same way and try to encourage people to go vegan in their day to day lives, and that desire to promote veganism is a great impulse to have. A counter to that impulse is all the messages coming at us constantly from vegans and non-vegans alike telling us it's never gonna happen, the world will never be vegan, it's unrealistic. But if we look at the figures, it's wholly realistic!
11. **Let's "do the math"** – which is an appropriate way to say it because an American has done it for us. Gary Francione, the law professor at Rutgers University is one of the people who has looked at these figures and he has pointed out that if every vegan in the UK "*who believes that veganism is a moral imperative*" were to convince just one other person to go vegan each year for 9 years, **we could have a vegan UK by 2025!**
12. I pause whenever I read or think about that, as it's just so huge!
13. The figure Gary Francione used for the number of vegans in the UK predated the recent Vegan Society survey which concluded that there are over 500,000 vegans in the UK. If we re-run the calculation using that figure we would have a vegan UK *in seven years*, so by 2023!! (500,000, 1m, 2m, 4m, 8m, 16m, 32m, 64m)

14. **But** we also know that not all vegans are either able and/or willing to advocate for veganism. Some live vegan quietly. Not every one of them is going to be out there convincing at least one person to go vegan every year.
15. So do we forget about those figures and give up? *No!* It's too close! Too real! We believe that those of us who can and who are willing to advocate for veganism just have to do that bit more. If we work hard and we work together we can make up the difference.
16. We've probably all witnessed the domino effect in our own lives, where leading by example, living vegan and talking to friends and family leads them to go vegan too. What we are doing at GVS is extending that out to promote that domino effect beyond our immediate circle of friends and family, to do our bit to turn Scotland vegan more quickly.

### III. How did Go Vegan Scotland start?

#### **Vegan Billboard**

17. It started with the impulse just described. Barbara's sister Susan (who went vegan about a year after her – so there's an example of the domino effect) had that impulse to do more, to promote veganism, to get the information out to people that she wished she'd had sooner.
18. Susan had the idea of a **vegan billboard**. To put a message up there that would challenge people to reconsider the assumption that some animals are for loving and others are for eating. At that time there hadn't been billboard like that in Scotland or in the UK as far as we are aware.
19. It was a local project, totally crowd funded, with local vegans getting behind it and putting their money into it. That was an important aspect of it because it meant that all these vegans who were feeling that need to do more could be part of that. So when it went up, firstly in Glasgow and then in Edinburgh, and it was amazing for local vegans to see, to see that clear message up there, challenging people on Great Western Road and outside a massive Tesco in Edinburgh to think about how they view animals.
20. However, billboards and other adverts can only do so much and we felt that what we needed to be out there speaking to people, engaging and ensuring people were getting the point and getting the information they needed.

#### **Leafleting**

21. So we tried **leafleting**. This is us in Glasgow last winter. This was the first time I'd gone out on the street like that and it was quite daunting, but it was very positive and we had some

really worthwhile interactions with people who actually *approached us* to talk when they realised our leaflets were about veganism.

22. We were Outside Central Station, keeping dry under that canopy and we knew we might be moved. The police approached us. We were ready for that, as we'd been warned we might be moved. They asked us what we were doing, and I explained we were just sharing information. "Yes, but it's about veganism" he said, which made me a bit defensive and I replied "yes, it's about veganism, but we're still just sharing information!" and he replied, "Uh, huh, and I'm interested in learning about veganism!" Oh! And this actually happened twice on one day, two pairs of police approached us with one of them interested in talking to us about veganism.
23. These and other interactions we had when we were out leafleting showed us that there *is* real interest and people *are* open to hearing a clear go vegan message.
24. We realised that we could have more impact if we set ourselves up somewhere where people could approach us, ask us for information, and challenge us with their doubts. With the Scottish weather, cover is essential and so we had to buy a gazebo and some other kit. We did that and got a small group of hardy volunteers on what turned out to be the coldest, wettest day in February this year, and **set up shop!**

### **Our First Vegan Information Stall**

25. That's a bit of an underestimate. It was Baltic! (Scottish expression for extremely cold!). You can see one of my dogs Kayleigh over to the left (rescue greyhound). In typical vegan fashion I was in a thin jacket and she had two coats on that day. It was grim!
26. I've got to admit I'd not done much in the way of street stalls although I'd been vegan by then for about 10 years, so I turned up at the stall with a bit of trepidation. I've spent enough time in Glasgow to know that there's always quite a lot of banter etc. So I expected a lot of people to stop at the stall and give us abuse, criticise us for trying to promote a vegan message but actually the opposite was true. The people who came up to the stall were genuinely curious. We had vegans turning up who were excited to see us out there, we had vegetarians who were very curious about how to become vegan, and we had lots of other people who were curious and genuinely keen for information. My experience that first day was I went from being nervous to being absolutely buzzing about it, I remember we all went for something to eat afterwards and we were all buzzing. Carol on the left is a neighbour of mine from the village (Falkirk!) and my enthusiasm was such that I then persuaded Carol to get involved. It was a really, really positive, energising experience. (Within the first 20 minutes we'd actually had 4 people talk to us, take a leaflet and tell us they were going to go vegan!)

27. As Glasgow went so well we decided to get a replicate kit for Edinburgh with the aim of holding a stall in both cities every month. We've pretty much managed to do that and in addition we've had a stall at the Meadows festival, Glasgow Let's eat (outside it!), Bute music Festival, and we've also done talks and food tours at the Edinburgh Fringe festival, talks in schools, and we held a film night (in Glasgow showing Speciesism the Movie).
28. We're doing a lot and we have a lot more we'd like to do! But it is important to remember that we're just a group of volunteers doing what we can in our spare time. There is **no big organisation behind us, no funding, no salaries, no expense budgets**. It's just vegans working to promote veganism.

#### IV. Our Advocacy

##### **It's a Matter of Justice**

29. In our advocacy we take a clear justice approach to animal rights and veganism. That means that we talk to people about the fact that it is wrong to use animals, they're living beings who feel and who want to live and it follows logically from that that we shouldn't pay people to exploit and kill them for us.
30. That is very straightforward, and it offers a clear and consistent approach that everyone can understand.
31. People will argue against it because they don't want to believe that they've been buying into something that's wrong, they don't like the thought of having to change their lifestyle, and they've had years of intense marketing, tradition and habit telling them it's ok.
32. But, whether or not they get defensive when it's first put to them, it is such a clear, logical position that it is very difficult to dismiss. If you think animals matter at all you should be vegan. Simple!

##### **Inspiration and Learning**

33. In taking this approach we have learned from a number of sources, in particular:
- Gary L Francione, The Abolitionist Approach and HowDoIGoVegan.com (and we recommend reading his articles and books and watching his talks on youtube) **(if you're familiar with his work you'll recognise many of the points we make today)**
  - Grumpy Old Vegans
  - Go Vegan Radio, Bob Linden
  - Vegan Sidekick
  - Ecorazzi

34. They all take the view that as a matter of justice/morality, animals should not be exploited or killed.

35. This approach:

- Gets to the root of veganism (puts animals at the core where they should be)
- Gives clarity to vegan advocacy
- We believe it offers an approach that we can all use to promote veganism in Scotland

### **Our Approach**

36. We promote veganism using:

- Clear vegan advocacy
- **Rational, logical, reasoned** approach, and
- Calmly speaking to the issues,

and we are:

- **Express, overt, principled** – (we're not shy about using the word "**vegan**", vegan means we reject the unnecessary exploitation and killing of animals and so that is a word we should all be proud of), and
- **Encouraging, positive, friendly**

37. This is the approach we always aim for, whether on or off line. (We're not perfect but this is always our aim!).

38. I find a lot of vegans shy away from speaking about the issues in a clear way like this. Perhaps because they don't yet have it clear in their minds that not exploiting animals is a matter of morality, rather than a personal choice.

39. It's not surprising they shy away from it when we think of what we're met with when we do speak clearly about the issues. "Militant", "aggressive", "extreme", "too serious", "lacking a sense of humour", "vegan police", "arrogant".

40. What's troubling is that these terms are used as much if not more by people who self-identify as vegan, as they are by non-vegans.

41. We're human, we don't want to be "that vegan". We don't want people to think we're humourless or pious. But that's what these accusations rely on. They're designed to silence us.

42. We have to remember that we're all at the forefront of this issue and are leading the way on vegansim. Few people would now say to someone who was against racism, or sexism, or

homophobia and who refused to take part in that type of behaviour and spoke out against it that they were militant, extreme, or arrogant or humourless. Vegansim is seen as different because it's about animals. That is speciesist and we just have to remember that and continue to be clear and consistent.

### What we Avoid

43. In our advocacy we avoid:

- **Accusing, condemning, vilifying or ridiculing** individuals or groups
- Victimising, harassment, **bullying**
- Targeting specific businesses
- Singling out specific groups or practices

44. You see a lot of the ridicule online. Vegans ridiculing people, calling them idiots, making out vegans are superior and making fools of non-vegans, we don't believe is helpful.

45. If you have a strong position you don't need to resort to personal insults. We have **logic, reason, morality** and **justice** on our side. We don't need to resort to name-calling, victimising or bullying and we don't think we should undermine the strength of our position by engaging in that.

46. It's also not accurate. Are all of our non-vegan family and friends stupid, selfish and evil? We don't think of it that way.

47. Another way to think about it is non-vegans are us before we went vegan. The majority of us weren't born vegan. Most of us spent a good period of time as independent, thinking adults, as non-vegans. Were we idiots then, evil, selfish, and then turned overnight into fabulous vegan butterflies? We don't think so.

48. We *do* think **non-vegan behaviour is wrong** and we do talk about that, but it's possible to talk about that without vilifying or victimising or making a fool of someone.

### Confusing Messages

49. We never promote

- **baby steps**
- **journeys**
- **vegetarianism**
- **reduction,**

we promote veganism and nothing less.

50. The idea that veganism is some incredibly difficult thing and something most people won't be able to pull off is just nonsense. We all went vegan. We're not that special.
51. Encouraging anything less than veganism is encouraging people to continue to pay others to use and kill animals for them. That's inconsistent, illogical, confusing and undermines our credibility.
52. For example, Meatless Mondays. Don't eat meat on Monday. Eat meat every other day, and fill your plates with dairy and eggs on Monday. You're just shifting one form of animal exploitation over to another.
53. In response to the *go vegan* message some people *will* go vegan overnight (we know some), others will gradually cut things out over a period of days, weeks, or even months. That's up to them. What's important is that we're consistent that going vegan is the right thing to do.
54. That doesn't mean undermining them if they start to make changes. It is possible to be encouraging without undermining your position. It is possible to give helpful information and guidance to people who are transitioning without suggesting that you think it's ok for them to continue to consume animals.
55. We think this does matter because the mixed messages and lack of clarity around this has led to confusion. We all know people who got stuck at vegetarian for decades. We only need to look at the McCartneys for high profile examples. Paul McCartney has been vegetarian for over 40 years! How can someone be that high profile about their vegetarianism and not feel any moral pressure to go vegan. And how can they continue to be associated with a business that makes products using dairy in its products? There's a real problem there and we believe the problem has been the lack of a consistent message.

### **Single Issue Campaigns (“SICs”)**

56. The best example of a SIC is probably the anti-fur campaign.
57. Who here remembers this ad, or these? (“I'd rather go naked than wear fur”.) If you were around in the late 1990's you probably will. There were a number of issues with the anti-fur campaign. As you can see from these pictures, they focused on women. They hold out fur-wearing women up as heinous, hideous, evil “bitches.” It actually says that expressly in the Lynx ad. So rather than highlighting that what the people were doing was wrong, they said the people themselves were evil. This led to reports of women being attacked, red paint thrown on them etc, and it certainly led to an atmosphere in which it was considered acceptable to publicly humiliate people (some people, fur-wearing women).



58. The campaigners involved would say it was effective, in that people were turned off fur and it's true that many people wouldn't have been seen in fur around that time. Does that mean it was a success?
59. Take a look at this picture and see if it reminds you of anything. This is basically now. Here we have Pink, one of many celebrities who are posing for PETA (often non-vegans), **20+ years later**, with the exact same ads, "I'd rather go naked than wear fur".
60. Why are we seeing PETA running the exact same campaign 20+ years later? Because it didn't work the first time around! Yes people turned away from fur for a time, because it wasn't fashionable, because all the super models said they weren't doing it. Which lasted about 5 minutes, and then they all appeared on the catwalks again draped in fur. We all know that fur is now everywhere again.
61. Why? I believe it's because these types of campaigns fail to get to the issue. They do nothing to get across the point that exploiting animals is wrong. The people who turned off fur were still eating animals.
62. They lack any coherent moral message; they pick out *one use* of animals and hold that out as evil, saying nothing about all other forms of animal use, which are equally wrong. So here they're telling everyone how evil and ugly women who wear fur are, and yet there's no comment on wearing leather. So it's fine to kill an animal and wear their skin to look cool. That doesn't make you a bitch or a bastard, that's totally fine.
63. That's the perfect example of a single issue campaign. There are others, and basically any animal-related campaign that selects one thing and encourages people to avoid supporting that one thing, making no reference to a general requirement of justice that we not exploit animals in any way, is missing the point and is single issue.
64. SIC's encourage and perpetuate the same disconnect that non-vegans live with every day - the idea that some animals matter more than others. That notion is what 99% of the population already believes, whether they realise it or not, and SIC's encourage that way of thinking.

## **Welfarism**

65. Finally, we don't promote welfarism. We don't spend our time trying to advocate for changes to our welfare laws. The reasons are that higher welfare is a myth, it doesn't work and it's not what people think it is. For as long as animals are seen as property, commodities, things to make money from, they will be used, abused and killed, and any protections will be minimal, and/or they'll be changes that actually benefit the industry.

66. One example that Francione talks about is pre-stunning. Most of us have seen the footage, stunning doesn't know the animal out completely, they're still awake, they're still aware, they still feel, they just can't resist, they can't thrash about as much so they're not going to injure the slaughterhouse workers. So it helps the process along, and industry wants it.
67. Another example Francione uses is gassing chickens (instead of slitting their throats). This stops their bodies from being damaged in the process of killing them, protecting their flesh for consumption. It also saves on worker costs (you need fewer employees). Again, it's better for the industry.
68. We were all brought up to think that animal welfare law means the state is looking after the animals, the government is making sure that it's not that bad, but actually when you look at it our whole welfare system is inherently ludicrous. What welfare law says is what's prohibited is the infliction of "**unnecessary suffering**". But we're talking about the systematic exploitation and killing of living beings for the sake of our taste-buds (primarily) or fashion-sense. The entire process is completely unnecessary.
69. Our welfare laws say all of that is OK, all of that is morally acceptable. Bringing living beings into existence, controlling them entirely, exploiting them for what you can make money from, and killing them, with a struggle, with violence, with blood. All of it completely unnecessary. All of that is fine, because it's all part of the money-making process. Welfare regulations can never touch the central process because it's premised on exploitation being acceptable.
70. All that welfare laws really prohibit is causing "extra suffering" during the process. So you shouldn't stub out your cigarette on an animal, as you give them electric shocks to make them go up the ramp into the killing area, where they will have a metal bolt fired into their head, be clamped by the hind leg, raised up into the air where they will hang upside down, have their throat slit, and bleed out. All of that is fine, just don't stub out your cigarette on them in the process. That is utterly ludicrous. It's like some sort of parody. But we've all been brought up to think it makes sense.
71. Our welfare laws are also a blocker to veganism, because welfare laws allow people to tell themselves that it's not that bad, someone is looking after the animals and making sure that there's no "unnecessary suffering". Most of us spent a long period of time buying into that, thinking we were doing right by buying "higher welfare" products for more money. I certainly did it, and I believe if I hadn't had that crutch, that out (that is given to us by welfare laws) I would have gone vegan sooner.
72. Welfare laws regulate the exploitation of animals, exploitation which we all think is immoral and unjust. If you regulate something you legitimise it. So if we campaigned for higher welfare laws we'd be saying it's appropriate to have laws like this one, setting out the detailed regulation of exactly how we exploit living animals, just how small their cages can be, just how

long we can keep them in isolated confinement. The reality is that the very existence of these laws is morally repugnant.

73. The root of the issue is the use of animals and our demand for that use, and we must get to the root of the issue. Welfare laws have been around for hundreds of years, yet we exploit and kill far more animals now. We believe we will have welfare laws for hundreds more years unless we stop promoting “higher welfare” animal products, and start focussing on promoting veganism.

### **Applying this in GVS**

74. Those are the principles we follow and we ask that anyone volunteering on our stalls follow that approach while on the stalls.
75. With all of that in mind, it was important to us that it be clear that whenever we’re discussing a particular issue (eggs, milk, skin, entertainment....) we’re always doing that within the context of an overall Go Vegan message and that was a key reason we decided on the name **Go Vegan Scotland** when we broadened out from the Vegan Billboard Project. Having that in the name means that is always clear. Of course we would like to see a vegan world, and the Scotland part of the name is just to make it more focussed, to bring the objectives closer to home and make the targets more achievable and encourage vegans in Scotland to work together towards those targets.

### **V. How This Works on the Stalls**

76. The stalls are deliberately set up so that people approach us. We don’t go out into the street trying to stop people. People can see the “Vegan Information” banner and it’s clear why we’re there, which means when people approach they have a much more open mind, they’re curious and are coming over for information.
77. There’s a huge variety of different kinds of people who approach the stall, from young children to grandparents of vegans, which is fantastic to see. What they can see as well is that there’s real variety in term of the people on the stalls (i.e. there’s no vegan “type”). It’s clear that they can ask us questions. Most of the time they’re looking for help in terms of how they can go vegan, or they have questions about why going vegan would be the right thing. I don’t always have the answer. Sometimes I’ll refer to one of the other volunteers on the stall who might have more knowledge or experience in that area than I do, and that’s ok because we’re all there to help one another on the stalls.
78. I tend to find that speaking to people on the street is very different to speaking to people online. People are much more open minded and you don’t get that same resistance. When

you're speaking to someone face to face you have the benefit of body language and eye contact and they can see that you're friendly and you're not trying to judge them which really helps. We get a lot of positive comments on the stall. We're out there in our own time, often in dreadful weather, because we care about animals and people can appreciate that. We've also had some really difficult conversations on the stall. We have vegetarians who come over and we tell them the truth about the dairy and egg industries and we have had people being genuinely very upset. The good thing about the stall is we're such a friendly bunch that we can offer support to them and make sure they don't go away upset on their own. (One of the positive things is that we are there to offer the solution as well as the truth; once they recognise that the same issues with animal flesh apply to all other forms of animal exploitation we can point out that by going vegan they can stop supporting that immediately).

79. We find that because we offer support alongside our very clear moral message, some people come back to us again and again, they go away and think about what we've discussed and come back the next time with more questions. We often refer them to the web site for more information as well.

80. We've had some great success stories from the stall. One particular guy who spoke to our Andrea who's in the front row in one of our T shirts spoke to him when he was vegetarian about dairy and eggs and honey, and he went vegan and now he's started helping on the stalls and he's a vegan activist which is wonderful.

81. If you've visited our stall today you'll have seen we don't have any food samples, which is unusual. Generally we have a lot of samples. As Barbara said, we're all volunteers and we provide our own shop-bought samples. We really use the samples as a prop. When people see that there's free food they tend to come over, and they're often surprised when they find out it's all vegan. That can start off a conversation. Sometimes people come over because of the Vegan Information banner. We usually have vegan cheese on the stall because it's one of the things a lot of people say they "couldn't live without" or would prevent them going vegan. We often have various different vegan cheeses to sample. However, we always make it clear that we're not saying come and find a vegan cheese you like, then maybe you'll go vegan, instead we're saying going vegan is the right thing to do and we should all be vegan whether we like vegan cheese or not, but we will help you to sample what's available.

82. When you speak to people (about the moral issues) some people get it right away. You can see their viewpoint changing during the conversation. It's very positive when that happens. We do also sometimes have difficult conversations and often you come away from that wondering if you've made any inroads with that person, and it can quite surprise you when that person comes back a week or two weeks later, or you get a message through Facebook or Twitter and you see that person is now vegan.

83. We also now have the Virtual Reality headsets on the stalls because it's not always the case that people will really get it through conversation, for some people they need to see what animals go through to really understand what we're talking about when we discuss slaughter and the slaughterhouse. The footage is all of industry standard practices, it's not exceptional brutality filmed through undercover investigations, it's what always happens. We offer people a cupcake for watching the footage and having a conversation, we talk about the fact that going vegan is the only answer and about how to go vegan.

84. One of the benefits I've found from being part of the Go Vegan Scotland team and working on the stalls is that I get to work as part of a great team, we're all working for the same thing and we've become great friends. Quite often we go for food after the stalls, which gives us a good chance to talk about conversations we've had that day and we realise that we can do much more together than by going out there and trying to help animals on our own. Some of us have even been on holiday together and Carol and I have children roughly the same age who have come to the stalls as well.

## VI. **Materials**

85. We quickly realised we needed materials for the stalls because we wanted materials that would give people the clear moral basis for going vegan and there's very few leaflets or groups that you can refer people to that carry that clear moral message. We also wanted to give people the information and resources that we'd found useful when we first went vegan, to speed up that process for them and make it easier.

86. Luckily it turned out that one of the then new volunteers, Yvonne, had the skills we needed to design leaflets and a web site.

## **Web Site**

87. When I first became vegan, almost 3 years ago now, I found it very time consuming to search for information about what to buy, what was safe to use for vegans, where to eat etc. Some of that information was confusing, and I came across a lot of mixed messages.

88. We wanted a web site that would be as simple as possible, whilst still providing the essential resources to help people go vegan and live vegan.

89. We felt that it could also be an invaluable vegan hub for existing vegans too, where they could find everything they needed in one place and then revisit it time and again.

90. Before I take you through the main parts of the website I'd like to point out that I'm not a web designer or even a graphic designer, I'm self-taught, I figured it out along the way.

91. I think it's important to point that out as each of us here at GVS bring our own talents to the mix, we do what we can with the skills we have. We have some people for example who don't feel able to come to our stalls but will volunteer to help in other ways.

92. Let's have a quick look at the website, and I'll show you how to find your way around using our navigation bar (so that you can make use of it and so you can refer non-vegans to sections of it):

### Home Page

93. We've set it out like a conversation throughout the site, starting off by explaining exactly what veganism is on the home page, putting animals front and centre so it's clear immediately that veganism is about them. There's a clear "go vegan" message. We also break it down on that page into the main areas of life where veganism has an impact, linking through to resources to help people in each of those areas.

### Why

94. Then the "Why" page talks in more detail about why we should all be vegan, challenging society's perception of animals as things we can use, and providing links to footage that helps show that animals are living, feeling beings, then links to footage of what we do to animals when we use them, and to some well-known documentaries such as Earthlings and Cowspiracy.

95. Any graphic links at all on our site are labelled clearly and coloured red with no preview picture so you don't have to worry about seeing upsetting images unless you choose to click on the link.

96. The "Big Buts" page was created to provide answers to many of things we often hear people say on the stalls; *We need animals to be healthy, where do you get your iron/calcium/protein? Etc.* This section covers the blockages that some people put up when their long held beliefs are challenged and provides responses to each one. This is hopefully helpful for vegans talking to people about veganism.

97. As a new vegan I was often caught out with some of these things, as you don't suddenly go from non-vegan to vegan expert overnight! We thought it would also serve as a great resource for existing vegans to help them respond to these kinds of comments. We're adding to it all the time, if there's a question you think should be on there, please let us know.

98. Lastly on this menu there's the 'Other Benefits of Going Vegan' page, covering health, the environment and world hunger issues, all backed up with links to resources and studies from multiple sources.

## How

99. We hope that by this point of the website people will be ready to look at how to go vegan themselves. On the 'How Do I Go Vegan' page, there's information about how to live vegan, so we tell them how to put it into practice.

100. We give them links to useful resources on food:

- what's available in local supermarkets,
- which restaurants offer vegan options,
- how to read food labels
- and links to recipe sites
- there's even a section where we list local vegan businesses, (if your business isn't on there and you would like us to add it please let us know).
- we offer a downloadable file with all the restaurants in Glasgow and Edinburgh we know of which are vegan or offer vegan options (we'd like to have lists for other towns and cities on our page, but we need local vegans to maintain them and send them to us) (we cannot guarantee up to date or accurate as we are all volunteers and just doing what we can when we can 😊).

101. We give resources on non-food products. We discuss clothing, cosmetics and cleaning products, including links to Hairdressers and Make Up artists etc. There's even a page for Sanctuaries and Shelters and a new one called 'Living Vegan' which we're still developing at the moment.

102. We always provide a link to our **Facebook photo album**, where we store more information and options in each of these areas. These albums are really popular and the feedback we get about this is very positive.

103. We have our vegan blog, which has quite a few entries so far, including one or two from guest bloggers.

104. And there's an events calendar on the home page with details of our upcoming stalls if you would like to volunteer or just pop along for a friendly chat with us. This is mirrored on our FB page where all our stalls are listed as public events.

## Support

105. Under the Support tab we have our "store" which is where you can order our merchandise, which is intended to help people promote veganism while out (Tshirts, hats, bags, stickers, badges).

106. The important thing is they don't just say were "vegan" (although we think that's worthwhile) they also direct people to our web site where they can learn about veganism and tap into local support and the local vegan community. We know from feedback that the car stickers, hats and T-shirts have connected vegans out and about who wouldn't otherwise have known they were both vegan.
107. Our restaurant thank you cards are designed as a handy credit card sized card you can carry in your wallet and leave with your tip, letting firstly the waiter and then the venue see that you appreciated them having vegan options, encouraging them to do more, but importantly they also say clearly that we're vegan because it's the right thing to do, so they learn if they didn't know already that veganism is not a picky diet (a lot of venues still think that). (We will be updating the cards when we reorder as we now believe "compassion" is not necessarily an appropriate way to describe what veganism is about.)
108. We do have some expenses (public liability insurance, web site, printing leaflets and cards, stall kit) and so far volunteers have been paying for samples themselves. So the secondary reason for the merchandise is to make a wee bit from it to put into the GVS fund to use for these types of expenses. No-one takes a penny in salary, it all goes back into our advocacy. We know people want to help us and so there is a donate button so that people can contribute and we have an online store too for purchasing our t-shirts and stickers etc. to spread the vegan message.
109. We never want GVS to become a big organisation focused on raising money. We want it to remain a grass-roots group of volunteers working to promote veganism, with the main "donation" being the time and effort put in by volunteers.
110. It took a lot of work to create the web site, but it was worth it as I know I would have found things so much easier if our website was around for me back then. We'd like to keep it up to date and would love your help with that. If you see something out of date or you think there's something else it would be good to have please let us know. Just send us an email or a message. If there's a particular question you think would be good to have included on the Big Buts page again just let us know.

## Leaflets

111. Our leaflets are designed to stand alone, but also to refer to the key sections of our web site for more information. They take a clear justice approach and set out the key areas Yvonne just covered, so what is veganism, it's about justice for animals, everyone should be vegan, and how do you go vegan and then all the other benefits of veganism, in each section referring back to the section of the web site for more detail. They can be ordered on our



website for the printing costs (no added donation element). We have them printed in bulk through a vegan printers using recycled paper.

## VII. **Social Media**

112. In addition to the web site we're on a number of social media platforms and have been building followers since February:

- FB – 3,714
  - Instagram – 2,233
  - Twitter – 1,000
- (As at January 2017)

113. Some people follow us on all platforms but we also pick up different people on each so it's all part of reaching people in different ways and again we're always pointing back to the website and facebook where we have local as well as general vegan information and support.

## VIII. **Growing GVS**

114. We've only been working together like this since February this year and we've achieved a lot in that time with only a small group of people. We're all very ambitious about what we would like to do with GVS. As the name would suggest we do want to turn Scotland vegan and that's not going to happen without help.

115. We would like to see GVS stalls popping up in every town and city in Scotland, at events as well. To do that we will need more people to help us. We attended a very successful event in Dundee recently and some conversations have taken place recently about a GVS stall there. I had a conversation earlier on today with a member of the audience about Aberdeen. We want to see more stalls in more places more frequently.

116. Ideally we would like to see these stalls take place under the as GVS banner because:

- the Go Vegan banner makes it clear that it's about veganism and nothing less
- economies of scale, we can share the same materials, it takes time, effort and money to develop the materials and so the more people who use them the better
- you achieve consistency of message, reliability and reputation if we are all working together with the same principles applied
- Yvonne has made a great job of the website and it takes a lot of time and energy to keep a website up and maintained so it makes sense for people to help Yvonne to maintain it

117. Recognise that not everyone can get out on the street. Maybe they can be ambassadors in day to day lives, wear our Ts and hats, carry our cards and leaflets and be ready to hand them over when you get into conversation with someone. Some people are not comfortable talking to people on the street. We have given you our experience with over 90-95% of conversations being positive on these street stalls but for some people it will never be in their comfort zone. Some people work weekends etc.
118. There are other ways people can help. People have different skill sets. You can help us from your living-room. We need lots of backroom support. A good example of that was Siobhan who is on the front row, and she works most Saturdays and so couldn't attend most stalls, but did attend an event recently and wanted to get involved and asked us what she could do to help, so we asked her to contact vegan businesses for samples for the stalls and so far we got a stack of cheese from Bute Island and a stack of Oatly vouchers. She went on to work on gathering vegan xmas menus for us. So there's always lots of things to help with.
119. We are mostly located in the central belt and so don't know what's happening in terms of vegan options and vegan venues in other areas of Scotland. We need local vegans to tell us. Tag us, send us pics, send us menus, leave our thank you cards and send us pics of that, share our posts on FB/Twitter/Instagram.
120. If anyone in the audience wants to get involved with this sort of more backroom help just let us know.
121. We'd like to do more school talks, so if you know any high school teachers who might invite us along we'd be keen to set up talks / food demos etc. It is the case that people who are promoting a non-vegan message are in our schools regularly, seafood businesses, dairy farmers etc invited into schools to talk to our children so it's important we are also going in to offer a counter to that (miss-information!).
122. Going vegan is essential and is the most important thing you can do for animals, but it's also the least we can do for animals. It's not enough. If we want to change things for the better everyone needs to do more individually and collectively and hopefully we'll begin to see real change.

Thanks for listening!

**[goveganscotland.com](http://goveganscotland.com)**