



Chris Heaton-Harris
Member of Parliament for Daventry
House of Commons, London SW1A
0AA
Tel: 020 7219 7048

February 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about zoos, wildlife parks and aquariums.

I understand the unique set of circumstances which these places have faced throughout the coronavirus pandemic. I have read some amazing stories over the past months of keepers moving into zoos, showing their fantastic commitment to the welfare of the creatures in their care.

As the Prime Minister said, since the pandemic began last year, the whole United Kingdom has been engaged in a national effort to fight COVID-19. In the face of a new variant of the virus, which is between 50 and 70% more transmissible, we need to do more to bring this new strain under control.

As such, animal attractions such as zoos, safari parks, aquariums, and wildlife centres have had to close. I understand how tough everyone will have found this news. I am aware that applications for the zoo support fund are still being accepted and further details on how to apply can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-apply-for-the-zoos-support-fund>.

Ministers initially launched a £14 million fund to support zoos and aquariums during these unprecedented times. This was extended to £100 million in response to feedback from the zoo industry. This funding has helped attractions cover costs relating to animal keeping such as feed, heating and security, and is on top of a number of support schemes already available, including business rates relief, the business interruption loan scheme and the job retention scheme. I know that the Government recently expanded eligibility criteria for this funding and have made it easier for zoos to plan ahead by encouraging them to apply for support well in advance of running into financial difficulties.

The Government is continuing to engage regularly with some of the major zoos and aquariums to identify the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on larger organisations. This includes monitoring concerns around potential implications for animal welfare. I am aware that consideration of proposals for any longer-term support that might be needed for the sector is ongoing.

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I would like to reassure you that my colleagues and I understand the challenges faced by zoos and aquariums during these unprecedented times. Ministers have been engaging with the main industry association, the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) and are also taking expert advice from Defra's Zoos Expert Committee. I will monitor this issue over the winter period and will talk to Treasury officials to ensure funding for this sector continues.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY