

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

15th June 2020

Dear Constance,

RE: CORONAVIRUS - ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS.

Thank you for contacting me recently about the reopening of zoos and aquariums; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

I understand the unique set of circumstances which these places have faced throughout the Coronavirus pandemic. I have read some amazing stories in recent weeks of keepers moving into zoos and I can only thank them for their fantastic commitment to the welfare of the creatures in their care.

I was pleased that the Prime Minister announced that outdoor facilities at zoos and safari parks were allowed to reopen from the 15th June 2020, having been pressing for this on the back of your correspondence and that from other local people. Aquariums, where these are indoors, and other indoor attractions at zoos and safari parks will have to remain closed for now. This is because there is a greater risk of Coronavirus transmission indoors.

I am delighted that Ministers launched a £14 million support fund to support zoos and aquariums during these unprecedented times. This funding will continue to help 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.

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.

In closing, I would like to reassure you that Ministers understand the challenges faced by zoos and aquariums during these unprecedented times. I am pleased that they have been engaging with the main industry association, the British & Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA). They are also taking expert advice from DEFRA's Zoos Expert Committee.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE