



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon George Eustice MP
Secretary of State for Environment,
Food and Rural Affairs

Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

T 03459 335577
defra.helpline@defra.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 4 June to the Duchy of Lancaster and to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport about the reopening of Chester Zoo. Your email has been passed on to Defra because we are the Government Department responsible for this policy area.

We recognise that organisations like Chester Zoo are working tirelessly during this challenging time to safeguard the health and welfare needs of animal collections in their care.

Zoos, safari parks and aquariums are now allowed to reopen, subject to appropriate social distancing measures being in place. Allowing zoos and aquariums to fully reopen is a vital step towards enabling them to cover some of the cost of animal care.

The move follows close work by the Government with the zoo industry to ensure visitor numbers can be managed and safeguards are put in place. The decision to relax restrictions on these attractions is part of the Government's careful approach to easing the lockdown in phases, guided by the advice of scientific and medical experts.

A number of schemes have been made available to businesses and charities that should help them during this emergency. Zoos are able to apply for the full range of COVID-19 support measures that the government has made available to businesses. Details can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>

In addition, specifically for zoos in severe financial distress, the Government introduced a Zoos Support Fund on 4 May for licensed zoos in England. Where a zoo has fully explored and exhausted all other reasonable avenues to generate income and reduce costs, including the existing COVID-19 business support schemes, then they can apply for this fund. More information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-zoos-and-aquariums>

In response to feedback from the zoo industry the fund will now be extended to provide support to the sector of up to £100 million. Further details on the new scheme and eligibility will be released over the coming weeks.

We will be engaging with some of the major zoos and aquariums, including Chester Zoo, to assess their needs and future support options.

Defra officials continue to work with BIAZA (British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums) to monitor concerns and gather insights from industry on current issues, including the unique issues affecting the larger zoos across the country.

RT HON GEORGE EUSTICE MP