



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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3 November 2020

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 15 September about Government support for zoos and aquariums.

The Government recognises that zoos are undertaking very valuable work at this time to ensure that the health and welfare needs of the diverse range of animals they care for are well met. We are aware of the issues currently facing zoos and we have been engaging with the main industry association, the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA), and with individual zoos about the best way forward.

On 27 June 2020, Defra announced the Zoo Animals Fund, a package of up to £100 million for England's zoos and aquariums, a major expansion of the £14 million Zoos Support Fund which has now come to an end. We recognise this has been an extremely tough time for the sector and have taken on board the feedback received from zoos on the Zoos Support Fund. As a result of this feedback we made the following improvements to the new fund:

- The Government listened to comments from zoos regarding the need to expand the eligibility criteria. The Zoos Support Fund, as a fund of last resort, required applicants to be entering their final 6 weeks of financial reserves when applying. We have increased this threshold to 12 weeks, and zoos can now apply before reaching this point to help with their business planning.
- We have increased the £100,000 cap on grants to £730,000, which is the maximum allowed under section 3.1 of the Coronavirus State Aid Temporary Framework.
- The Government has simplified the application process wherever possible.
- Zoos can now claim costs of pre-planned essential maintenance and repair works alongside other animal care costs.

The objective of the Zoo Animals Fund is to provide for operators who, due to a COVID-19-related drop in income, need support in caring for their animal collections between now and the start of the next season. It is not a guarantee to ensure that individual zoo operators themselves stay in business. If zoos are downsizing or rehoming their collection, either to reduce overheads or in preparation for closure, the fund can also provide support for the costs associated with this.

Zoos can apply for the Zoo Animals Fund up until 16 November 2020 and information on how to apply can be found at the following links:

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

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

On September 24 2020, the Chancellor outlined the Winter Economy Plan, a package of measures that will continue to protect jobs and help businesses through the uncertain months ahead as we continue to tackle the spread of the virus. The package includes a new Jobs Support Scheme to protect millions of returning workers, a 15% VAT cut for the hospitality and tourism sectors, and help for businesses in repaying government-backed loans.

The Job Support Scheme will open on 1 November 2020 and will run for 6 months, replacing the current furlough scheme that ends on 31 October 2020. More information on this scheme can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/job-support-scheme>

The temporary 15% VAT cut for the tourism and hospitality sectors will now run until the end of March 2021 rather than 13 January 2021. This will give businesses in the sector the confidence to maintain staff as they adapt to a new trading environment.

The Government also intends to give Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme lenders the ability to extend the length of loans from a maximum of six years to ten years if it will help businesses to repay the loan. In addition, the Chancellor also announced he would be extending applications for the Government's COVID-19 loan schemes until the end of November. As a result, more businesses will now be able to benefit from the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the Bounce Back Loan Scheme and the Future Fund. This change aligns all the end dates of these schemes, ensuring that there is further support in place for those firms who need it.

More information on the temporary 15% VAT cut for the tourism and hospitality sectors and the updates to the loan schemes can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-outlines-winter-economy-plan>

I hope you will strongly encourage eligible zoos within your constituency to apply to the Zoo Animals Fund and to utilise the support recently outlined in the Winter Economy Plan.

I remain committed to ensuring the sector can deliver the best possible care for their animals.



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