



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

**The Rt Hon the Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park**  
Minister of State

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

Our ref: MC2021/01606/MO

16 March 2021

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 4 November about closure of safari parks. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area. I apologise for the unacceptable delay in responding. Defra was required to deal with extremely high volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19 and this significantly disrupted the correspondence process. We are putting systems in place to avoid a repeat of these delays.

We have worked closely with BIAZA (British and Irish Association for Zoos and Aquariums) on their reopening guidance to ensure that zoos and aquariums have the information on how to open safely. Defra officials have also met with the CEOs of the largest charitable zoos and BIAZA to understand the measures that zoos have put in place to manage social distancing. We are also pleased that a number of zoos and aquariums have secured the Visit Britain 'We're Good to Go' COVID-19 industry standard and consumer mark. This mark provides reassurance that the business adheres to Government and public health guidance and that the necessary COVID-19 safety processes have been put in place.

The Government has announced the current COVID-19 restrictions applying to outdoor areas of zoos and aquariums will be eased at step two of the roadmap no earlier than 12 April, and indoor areas will follow at step 3, no earlier than 17 May. We understand the challenges faced by zoos and aquariums during these unprecedented times and recognise this has been an extremely tough time for the sector. However, the Government had to act to control the spread of the virus. The single most important action we can all take at this time, to fight coronavirus is to stay at home, to protect the NHS and save lives. The decision to relax restrictions as set out in the roadmap is part of the Government's careful approach to easing the lockdown in phases, guided by the advice of scientific and medical experts.

Please find more information at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>

Thank you once again for your email.

With best wishes,

THE RT HON THE LORD GOLDSMITH OF RICHMOND PARK