

# First Minister visits Edinburgh Zoo to see the pandas



First Minister Alex Salmond has congratulated Edinburgh Zoo on meeting a volunteering milestone during its centenary year. Now in its 100<sup>th</sup> year, the Zoo has just recruited its 100<sup>th</sup> volunteer. Danielle Bowers was one of a number of Zoo volunteers joining Mr Salmond and Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) CEO Chris West on a visit to the giant panda enclosure.

This morning marked Mr Salmond's first visit to the pandas – which have already attracted more than half a million visitors to Edinburgh Zoo.

Mr Salmond's meeting with a number of the Zoo's volunteers forms part of his celebrations of Volunteers' Week, which will include a reception at Edinburgh Castle and a shadowing session with RVS volunteers at Edinburgh's Western General Hospital.

The First Minister said:-“Edinburgh Zoo is a fantastic institution, bringing fun and learning to generations for a hundred years now.

“Thousands of Scots and visitors have had incredible experiences at the Zoo over the years, and it has been a beacon of animal conservation and education for people much further afield.

“The RZSS – the charity that owns and manages Edinburgh Zoo – has a professional staff that is second to none and Scotland

is fortunate to have experts of their calibre working here.

“The Zoo’s volunteers have also made an incredible contribution over the years and its reputation is in no small part thanks to their efforts. In its 100<sup>th</sup> year, it’s now passed the milestone of recruiting its 100<sup>th</sup> volunteer – a fantastic achievement.

“During Volunteers’ Week, I’m sure I speak on behalf of all of us when I say ‘thank you’ to them and to all of Scotland’s volunteers for their hard work and dedication.”

This morning’s event also marked the First Minister’s first visit to Edinburgh Zoo’s giant pandas, Tian Tian and Yang Guang.

Mr Salmond added:-“All of Scotland has been delighted to welcome Tian Tian and Yang Guang to Edinburgh Zoo and I’m thrilled finally to see them in their home!

“Their presence here is proving to be a huge draw for visitors to the Zoo, meaning a welcome boost for tourism and the economy. Already, they have attracted more than 500,000 visitors in their first year.

“It is further proof, if any were needed, of the international reputation of RZSS and its standing abroad in the fields of science, research and conservation.”

Chris West, CEO of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, said:

“We were delighted to welcome the First Minister to Edinburgh Zoo to talk about the worldwide charitable conservation, research and education work of RZSS.

“It was also a pleasure to introduce our famous black and white bears Tian Tian and Yang Guang.”

Danielle Bowers, a volunteer at Edinburgh Zoo, added:

“It’s a real honour to be part of the 100 year history that is Edinburgh Zoo. I’m thrilled to actually be the 100<sup>th</sup> volunteer at such a momentous moment in this Scottish institution’s timeline.”