

Coronavirus – Edinburgh Zoo says its future is now at risk

Although zoos and wildlife parks in England can open on 15 June, it will be a further month at least before Edinburgh Zoo can open its gates and allow the public in. But Zoo bosses say that may be too late.

The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) has appealed to the Scottish Government to find a safe way to reopen Edinburgh Zoo and Highland Wildlife Park, warning that the charity's future remains at risk.



Photo courtesy of RZSS

RZSS chief executive David Field said, “We welcome the Scottish Government’s efforts to reopen the tourism sector in Scotland because we desperately need our parks to open again.

“While we understand it is vital for lockdown measures to be eased gradually, we had hoped to open by the end of June as part of phase two, with similar safety measures to protect staff and visitors as the zoos and safari parks which will reopen in England over the next few days.

“We also expected to open before places like hotels, pubs and restaurants because our parks are ideal spaces for people and families to enjoy nature in safe outdoor environments.

“Delaying the reopening of Edinburgh Zoo and Highland Wildlife Park for at least five weeks means we will miss the start of the summer and lose £500,000.

“We have had to borrow £5 million overall due to the loss of our visitor income and every day we remain closed increases

the risk that we will not be able to continue our wildlife conservation work. This includes saving the wildcat in Scotland, breeding polar bears at Highland Wildlife Park, bringing giraffes to Edinburgh Zoo and protecting chimpanzees from poaching in Uganda.”

The wildlife conservation charity has written to the Scottish Government to suggest practical ways to reopen both parks by the beginning of July.

“We have always been prepared to reopen initially to visitors and members from our local communities because we recognise that people travelling is a concern,” said Field.

“All around Europe, we are seeing zoos reopen safely, with many visitors travelling by car rather than using public transport and people behaving with respect and responsibility when they arrive.

“Zoos and safari parks are perfect places for people to visit as society gradually starts to reopen and we will continue to discuss these community benefits with the Scottish Government in the hope that we can open for the start of the summer.

“Reopening by the start of July will also help our charity recover because right now we are an endangered species in zoological terms.

“Everyone who loves Edinburgh Zoo and Highland Wildlife Park can play a part and make sure we have a bright future by giving a donation. The generous support we have received so far has been hugely appreciated.”

To donate to the Edinburgh Zoo appeal go to www.justgiving.com/campaign/HelpYourZoo