

Zoos and aquariums get government support

Earlier today four opposition MSPs staged a photo call at Edinburgh Zoo, demanding that the government allowed it to reopen in an effort to secure its future.

We are not sure whether any of that persuaded the Scottish Government that they needed to offer the zoo and other organisations like it some support, but that is what they have done. There will be a cap of £100,000 per zoo, but that may go some way to help.

Daniel Johnson, Ruth Davidson, Alex Cole-Hamilton and Andy Wightman posed for photos with animal puppets and we interviewed them all outside the front gate on St John's Road.

Christine Jardine MP who represents Edinburgh West said: "I am delighted for the zoo, everyone who works there and everyone who treasures it's fantastic work in conservation.

"This is a huge achievement!

"And as well as being a huge relief for the 300 people who work there, it also helps secure the future of the much loved Pandas and the thousands of other animals for whom the zoo is home.

"It demonstrates the power of the public and communities across Scotland who showed overwhelming support for the reopening of the zoo.

"The educational, physical and mental health benefits of being outside, and taking in nature, are central to our personal recovery, so I'm pleased that many more children and young people will once again be able to enjoy the natural world.

“This is a much desired – and needed- step!”

They all pointed to the fact that places like Jupiter Artland were open and so the zoo – essentially an outdoor garden – should also be open to the public. There are 300 employees at the zoo (although not all are working at present) and presumably this government support will help to secure their jobs.

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh also announced it can now reopen on 1 July 2020.

We are so delighted to announce that our four Gardens will reopen on Wednesday 1 July. It is an ideal opportunity for communities local to the Gardens to reconnect with the wonderful world of plants. Read our reopening update here: <https://t.co/Y0JffS0RRR> pic.twitter.com/53XnD3A7jU

– RBGE (@TheBotanics) [June 18, 2020](#)



Ruth Davidson, Alex Cole-Hamilton, Daniel Johnson and Andy Wightman pose for the photographers outside Edinburgh Zoo PHOTO © 2020 The Edinburgh Reporter

Zoos and gardens can now reopen from 29 June onwards provided they have put physical distancing measures in place in compliance with phase 2 restrictions.

Other recommendations include online ticket sales and only those who live within five miles of the attraction should be visiting.

This reopening date has been announced alongside an emergency funding support package worth £2.6 million. The funding will be split into £1.6 million for grants and £1 million for loans and will be made available to zoos and aquariums across the country for preserving animal welfare.

Zoos have faced significant difficulties throughout the lockdown, with reduced income resulting in shortfalls in funding.

Commenting on the First Minister's statement in the chamber,

Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham said:

“Zoos and gardens across Scotland can now begin preparations to welcome local visitors and animal enthusiasts back onto their grounds, in a safe and physically distanced manner, from 29 June.

“Physical distancing rules have had a significant impact on the entire UK zoo sector. Like many businesses, they are heavily dependent on seasonality and make most of their money over the spring and summer period. There is little income with the doors closed but unlike other visitor attractions money is still required to feed animals and pay staff to care for them.

“This £2.6 million funding package will provide a lifeline for zoos and aquariums to keep their critical work ongoing and protect animal welfare issues.”

The Joint Acting Director for the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums Nicky Needham said:

“We welcome today’s reopening announcement which will help Scotland’s fantastic zoos and aquariums continue the amazing conservation, education and the care they provide to their animals. Zoos and aquariums have faced extraordinary challenges, providing an exceptional level of animal care while incomes have disappeared during closure.

“BIAZA looks forward to working with Scottish Government officials to ensure further support to allow zoos and aquariums to thrive in the longer term future.”

Any indoor areas will remain shut until the government advises otherwise. This will include glasshouses, indoor viewing areas or walkthroughs, gift shops and cafés – although they may sell takeaway food and drink.

Earlier in the week the zoo announced that they really needed government help. The announcement today will allow them to

reopen on 29 June 2020.

We want to reopen [@HighlandWPark](#) and [@EdinburghZoo](#) for you soon, but while zoos in England can open on Monday, we've been told the earliest we can welcome you back is 15 July ☐

Every day we are closed puts our charity at risk.

(1/4) Read more ↴ ☐ pic.twitter.com/rtq1Hcpp7Y

– Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (@rzss) [June 12, 2020](#)

