

Government offers financial lifeline to zoos and aquariums

By Kathryn Clark

LICENSED zoos and aquariums in England whose income has been severely affected by the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions have been offered a financial lifeline by the government.

A £14 million support fund, which was announced on 4 May by the animal welfare minister Lord Goldsmith, is designed to help those that need additional support to maintain the welfare of their animals.

Individual establishments in England covered by the Zoo Licensing Act will be able to apply for grants of up to £100,000 to cover costs such as keepers' wages, animal feed and bedding, and veterinary care and medicines. If an application is approved, payments will be made over a maximum of three months.

However, Defra warned that the fund is aimed at supporting smaller zoos at immediate risk and at protecting animal welfare, and 'is not a guarantee to save every zoo and aquarium business or job'.

The Welsh government wrote



Zoos will be able to apply for grants of up to £100,000

to zoo operators in Wales in April explaining their support options. This includes the country's £500 million Economic Resilience Fund and the Third Sector Resilience Fund for Wales. However, both schemes operate on a first-come, first-served basis.

The BVA and the British Veterinary Zoological Society continue to lobby for support for zoos in Scotland, raising the issue in a meeting with Mairi Gougeon MSP, Scotland's rural affairs minister, on 14 May.

In Northern Ireland, the most significant zoological collection is Belfast Zoo – one of only a few local government-funded zoos in the UK and Ireland – which is being funded by Belfast City Council.

Jersey Zoo reopened its gates to members only on 12 May, saying that it hoped to open to non-members 'soon'. Elsewhere in Europe, some countries, including Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic, have started to ease their lockdown restrictions, with zoos being among the first businesses permitted to reopen, but only if social distancing requirements can be respected. ●