June 2020

Thank you for contacting me about support for zoos and aquariums. I obviously understand the unique set of circumstances which they are facing during this difficult time. I have read some amazing stories in recent weeks of keepers moving into zoos and I can only thank them for their fantastic commitment to the welfare of the creatures in their care.

Ministers are very aware of the difficulties faced during this pandemic and they have now launched a £14 million support fund for zoos and aquariums. I know that zoos are undertaking valuable work at this time to ensure that their animal welfare standards are upheld, and the animals’ health needs continue to be met.

This funding will help zoos cover costs relating to animal keeping such as feed, heating and security, and is on top of a number of support schemes already available to zoos, including business rates relief, the business interruption loan scheme and the job retention scheme. This is additional to other available relief such as VAT deferral.  I know my fellow Ministers will continue to work with our zoos across the country to discuss additional concerns about funding in the long term.

During this pandemic, vets have been allowed to stay open and that coronavirus has not caused any issues with the supply of veterinary medicines. I know that there are well-established procedures with the pharmaceutical industry to monitor and maintain veterinary medicine supplies which are needed, and these will continue.

The Government is working through its clear action plan based on doing the right thing at the right time, based on the best available science. As the Prime Minister has said, all restrictions will be kept under constant review and he will relax them when the evidence shows we are able to do so.

Finally, I can assure you that my Ministerial colleagues have been engaging with the main industry association, the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA), and with individual zoos about the best way forward. They are also taking expert advice from Defra’s Zoos Expert Committee.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,



**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**

**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**