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Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-904
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/06865/19

Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair of the Petitions Committee

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Dear Janet

Thank you for your letter of 11 September regarding 'Petition P-05-904 Ban the use of animals from circuses and travelling shows in Wales'.

I think it is important to put the issues raised into context and by way of background I provide information on the present status for both banning the use of wild animals in travelling circuses and the proposed licensing scheme for animal exhibits, which is out to consultation at the moment.

Banning the use of wild animals in travelling circuses in Wales

I introduced the Wild Animals and Circuses (Wales) Bill on 8 July this year. The purpose of this important Bill is to ban the use of wild animals in travelling circuses in Wales; an ethically unacceptable and outdated practice which has no place in modern society. The use of wild animals in travelling circuses contributes little to further our understanding of wild animals or their conservation.

The Bill does not affect the use of domesticated animals in travelling circuses, nor does it prevent wild animals being used for entertainment in other settings. There are not the same fundamental ethical objections to the use of animals in these other settings as there are for the use of wild animals in travelling circuses. There are differences with regards to the types of species kept, the conditions in which they are kept and how they are used or displayed.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The Bill is at Stage 1 of the scrutiny process and, if successful, is scheduled to receive Royal Assent in May 2020.

Mobile Animal Exhibits

In December 2017, following a public consultation, I announced my intention to introduce a licensing scheme for Mobile Animal Exhibits (MAEs) which meet a given criteria. I also used the public consultation to ask for views on banning the use of wild animals in circuses. There was overwhelming support from respondents for a ban. There are no circuses using wild animals based in Wales, but they do visit, and each time they do there are renewed calls to ban the practice. A later public consultation on a draft Bill attracted over six and a half thousand responses with 97% supporting the introduction of legislation to make it an offence for a wild animal to be used in a travelling circus.

However, the welfare of other animals being exhibited is also important to me. Since the 2017 consultation on MAEs, I have extended the scope to include 'all' Animal Exhibits (AEs), including those which are static in Wales. I launched a consultation on a licensing scheme for all AEs based in or visiting Wales to address concerns welfare standards are not routinely assessed in AEs.

The six week public consultation on the draft Regulations and accompanying Guidance was launched on 29th August and can be found at <https://gov.wales/animal-exhibits>

Whilst I cannot pre-empt the outcome of the consultation, the intention is the Regulations will play a key role in ensuring that the welfare standards of exhibited animals, including the domesticated species which continue to be used in travelling circuses, will be subject to regulation, maintaining robust standards and ensuring animals are exhibited in a way which encourages respectful and responsible attitudes towards all species. This approach is intended to deliver a scheme which will have a lasting impact on the welfare of exhibited animals and on the attitudes towards animals of future generations in Wales.

I can assure the Petitions Committee the development of the licensing scheme is to reinforce Welsh Government's commitment to ensure the highest welfare standards for all animals kept and exhibited in Wales and clearly demonstrate to visitors and residents of Wales alike that we are a nation of animal lovers and the welfare of all exhibited animals is taken seriously.

I urge everyone to read and respond to the consultation to ensure comments are taken into consideration in my final deliberations.

Regards



Lesley Griffiths AC/AM

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