



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

May 2020

## **CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN: SUPPORT FOR ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS**

Constituents have contacted me to register concern for zoos and aquariums during the lockdown and for the longer-term in the face of a lack of funds from visitors. I understand the unique set of circumstances which they are facing. I have read some amazing stories in recent weeks of keepers moving into zoos to care for the inmates, and I can only thank them for their fantastic commitment to the welfare of the creatures they look after.

I am pleased that Ministers listened to concerns such as these and launched a £14 million support fund for zoos and aquariums. I know that they are undertaking valuable work at this time to ensure that their animal welfare standards are upheld and animals' health needs continue to be met. This funding will help zoos cover costs specifically 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. I have spoken to Ministers who have assured me that they will continue to work with zoos across the country to discuss additional concerns about funding in the long term.

Vets have been allowed to stay open and I am assured 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.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me. The Government will do whatever it takes, and together we will get through this.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Conor Burns', with a horizontal line underneath.