

E-MAIL FROM: John F. Robins, Secretary, Animal Concern Advice Line (ACAL), c/o Animal Concern, Post Office Box 5178, Dumbarton G82 5YJ. Tel 01389-841111. Mobile: 07721-605521.  
Animal Concern Advice Line (ACAL) is a recognised Scottish charity: No. SC030982. Animal Concern Advice Line was established in 2001 to take on the charitable work of Animal Concern which was founded as the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society in 1876.

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Councillor Isobel McCallum,  
Convenor,  
Highland Licensing Board,  
The Highland Council,  
Council Headquarters,  
Glenurquhart Road,  
Inverness IV3 5NX

Dear Convenor,

I would be grateful if you would provide your colleagues on the Licensing Board with copies of this e-mail.

I write concerning the Black Isle Wildlife Park for which your Council has issued a zoo closure direction.

I was first made aware of problems at the Park in October 2014 by members of the public who had visited the Park and had been shocked by the poor conditions they found. One local raised a petition which was subsequently submitted to the Council. Comments on that petition included:

“Last time I visited the park I seen a dead goat, which to me looked like it had been in the enclosure dead a long time.”;

“There was a dead snake in its vivarium”;

“there was a decomposing budgie lying at the bottom of the first cage you come to on leaving the shop.”;

“in the bushes near the pond were decomposing birds which had been predated on”;

“enclosures were overgrown and full of rats and many of the animals appeared to have skin conditions”

“There was a dead duck getting eaten by other ducks in the duck pond, I told the keepers meerkats had escaped and they did nothing.”

Photographs supported the allegations of dead animals being left to rot.

Further petition comments alleged that a young boy broke his arm in a play area which had not been properly maintained and that visitors were constantly standing in animal excrement

In an e-mail of 7<sup>th</sup> October 2014 to Councillor Drew Hendry, Leader of Highland Council, I asked that a full inspection of the Park be carried as I was concerned that the animals were not being fed properly or kept under appropriate conditions. I also advised that when I had dealt with other zoos and animal parks with similar problems the difficulties had been caused by the owners suffering from health and/or financial problems. In a front page article in the Inverness Courier of 24/6/2016 someone who is helping to run the Park has said that part of the reason for the problems has indeed been the poor health of the owners.

On 5<sup>th</sup> November 2014 I received a reply from Alan Yates, Environmental Health Manager at Highland Council. Amongst other things his reply confirmed that the owners of the Park did not know how to feed their donkeys and goats or how to properly heat the accommodation of some of the exotic animals in the Park. I must admit that I was shocked to learn that Highland Council had given a Zoo License to someone who did not know how to feed donkeys or goats or knew that exotic reptiles needed heated accommodation.

In January of this year I received further reports from members of the public who raised similar serious concerns about the Park as I had received in October 2014. I raised these with your Council on 25<sup>th</sup> January. At that time I found it extremely worrying that there did not appear to have been any major improvements at the Park 15 months after I first raised my concerns with your Council.

From very recent media reports I understand that the owners intend removing the exotic animals from the Park in the hope that they can run it as a commercial petting zoo without the need for a Zoo License. I believe the Park also holds some native wild animals (Scottish Wildcats) which would have to be rehomed. They also have a Zebra which I understand the owner has had from birth, is very attached to and would like to keep as a pet. Much as I can understand the owner having an emotional attachment to this animal I would suggest that it has no place in a petting zoo and, as a herd animal, would be much better rehomed with others of its species.

My main reason for writing is to object to any application from Black Isle Wildlife Park for a Public Entertainments Licence (PEL). Most of the problems at the Park involved domestic animals which would still be there if a PEL is granted. There are also continuing problems with rodent infestation and the run down nature of several enclosures and public areas (see photos from last autumn on the link below).

I also request that Highland Council Licensing Board hold an inquiry into why the Black Isle Wildlife Park, whose owners did not understand very basic animal husbandry, was granted a Zoo License and why, after serious animal welfare and public safety issues were brought to your attention, it was over 18 months before a zoo closure direction was issued.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,  
Animal Concern Advice Line.

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