



ANIMAL CONCERN

PO Box 5178, Dumbarton G82 5YJ.

Telephone: 01389-841639. Fax: 0870-7060327. Mobile: 07721-605521

E-mail: animals@jfrobins.force9.co.uk Website: www.animalconcern.org



Thursday, 17 August 2006

Licensing Department
West Dunbartonshire Council
Garshake Road
Dumbarton G82 3PU

Dear Sirs,

I today received a copy of the Written Decision from the Standards Commission Scotland regarding their hearing into the conduct of Councillor Connie O'Sullivan at the Special Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council Licensing Committee held in the Council Chambers, Dumbarton on 28th September 2005. This meeting was specifically convened to decide on the controversial Zoo License application from Merlin Entertainments Limited who intended opening an aquatic zoo at Drumkinnon Tower, Lomond Shores, Balloch. Councillor O'Sullivan was one of only three Councillors who attended the Meeting.

Councillor O'Sullivan, despite being fully aware of her duty to declare all interests, had sat on this Licensing Committee Meeting and voted to grant the Zoo License without declaring she also sat on the Board of Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire to whom the granting of the License was vital to securing a 25 year lease of Drumkinnon Tower with Merlin Entertainments. Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire had spent £15 million of public money in the construction of Drumkinnon Tower and a further £3.9 million converting it to an aquarium.

The Standards Commission found that Councillor O'Sullivan had committed eight serious breaches of the Councillors' Code of Conduct at that Licensing Meeting and suspended her from all Council business for six weeks.

Of her attending the Licensing Meeting the Panel stated that the Councillor "... should have been aware that her interest as a Director of Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire was such as to preclude her taking part, as she had an interest that could reasonably be seen by a member of the public as influencing her role on the Licensing Committee. Instead she not only participated in the Licensing Committee Meeting of 28th September 2005 but did so without declaring an interest."

In their findings the Standards Commission Panel concluded that Councillor O'Sullivan "brought West Dunbartonshire Council, local government generally and potentially Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire into disrepute."

Given that Councillor O'Sullivan, one of only three Councillors at the Licensing Committee, failed in her duty to declare her interest in the matter under decision and then brought West Dunbartonshire Council into disrepute by participating in the Meeting and the decision to grant the Zoo License, I ask you to declare that Meeting null and void and rescind the Zoo License granted to Merlin Entertainments.

Further more, given the controversial nature of the application in that it has been stated that the aquatic zoo potentially poses a great danger to the Loch Lomond ecosystem, any new application should be dealt with by the full Licensing Committee (apart of course from any Councillors with a conflict of interest) who should ensure that all objections and evidence to the risk posed by the development be fully considered.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours faithfully,

John F. Robins,
Campaigns Consultant