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Campaign Success!

For once I've got something fairly positive to tell you. Last year I asked the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) to intervene when the Fife Animal Park was put up for sale for £500,000. This zoo was also a registered charity and under charity law any animals, equipment, buildings or land paid for from charitable funds could not be sold for profit but would have to be donated to a similar charity.

OSCR stepped in and stopped the sale of all the animals and other items belonging to the charity. Fife Council then got involved and arranged to rehome the animals. Fife Council also prosecuted Peter Lockhart, co-owner of the zoo, over neglect of the animals. He admitted failing to ensure the welfare of the animals in the zoo and to selling endangered species without a licence. He could have gone to jail but was instead fined just £2,000 and banned from keeping animals for five years.

The court was told that animals had been neglected for up to nine months prior to the closure of the park. Lockhart had failed to meet even the most basic needs of the animals. He admitted nine offences including failing to provide his animals with suitable accommodation, proper food and necessary veterinary treatment.

I am angry that Mr. Lockhart was not jailed or given a heavier fine. At the very least he should have been banned for life from keeping animals.

I am furious that, despite being informed of poor conditions at the park numerous times in the months and years before I got OSCR to intervene, Fife Council did not take action and prosecute Lockhart.

As you may know I am also campaigning for closure of the Black Isle Wildlife Park where the local authority gave a Zoo License to someone who does not know how to feed a donkey. That's two zoos which have been licensed and inspected by their respective local councils despite the fact the owners do not have a clue about how to meet the basic needs of the creatures in their care. In these cases the Zoo License might as well have been printed on toilet paper.

I'm all for devolving powers down to grass root levels but if local councils are totally incompetent when it comes to policing zoos in their area it is perhaps time for control to be taken away from the councils and given to an authority which knows what it is doing and does not wait for third parties to expose cruelty and neglect before they take action. I'll be sending you more info on that in the next few weeks.

Meanwhile you can read more about the Fife Court case in The Scotsman:
<http://www.scotsman.com/news/environment/fife-animal-park-owner-banned-from-keeping-animals-1-3658702>

Cheers 4 now, John

PS Look out for an important but far more mundane e-mail from me later today!