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Animal Concern is a pressure group registered as a non-profit making Limited Company
(Co. No. SC109126) established in 1988 as Animal Concern (Scotland) Ltd.
It incorporates the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society which was founded in 1876.

Dr. Charlotte Macdonald,
Interim Chief Executive Officer,
The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland,
Edinburgh Zoo,
134 Corstorphine Road,
Edinburgh EH12 6TS

Dear Dr. Macdonald,

I write concerning the removal of Hamish the polar bear from Highland Wildlife Park.

Before you commenced your current polar bear breeding project I asked RZSS not to breed these animals but instead to use your facilities at Kincaid to provide a non-breeding sanctuary for rescued bears. You had proved you could do this with the excellent enclosure and brilliant condition of your initial two male polar bears.

Sadly you ignored our request, brought in a female polar bear and she produced cute little cub Hamish. As I said at the time it would not be long before you had to find a new home for Hamish. That time has come and the fate of Hamish hangs in the balance.

Polar bear cub, Minty, born in Edinburgh in 1988, was sent to an enclosure at Antwerp Zoo. The enclosure was reminiscent of that at the old Glasgow Zoo. A small area of concrete with a small pool. When the last Glasgow Zoo polar bear died Director of the zoo, Richard O'Grady, vowed that he would never again allow a polar bear to suffer in such an inappropriate and damaging environment.

Attached is a pic of Minty taken by myself in Antwerp Zoo in 1993 not long after he was sent there.



After I challenged him over the barren, concrete Victorian era exhibit in which Minty was showing obvious signs of mental illness, Frederic Daman, Director of Antwerp Zoo, admitted Minty was “..... showing serious signs of head swinging and stereotypical behaviour. The behaviour results from a form of stress”. Mr. Daman also promised to create a new bear park with far better conditions. Just a year later, on 17th June 1994, Minty died in that same concrete enclosure at Antwerp Zoo.

I understand that previously at least one, if not more, polar bear cubs were sent from Edinburgh Zoo to a Japanese bear park. These parks had and perhaps still have, a terrible reputation for how they keep their animals.

Please tell me what are the minimum standards you will accept for any facility offering a new home for Hamish? When the current situation improves I ask that RZSS staff go, preferably unannounced, and inspect any facility offering Hamish a new home.

I urge the RZSS to think again about allowing more polar bear cubs to be bred at Kincaig. You have created an excellent sanctuary where casualty bears could live out their lives with a quality unavailable in most zoos. Don't use it to create more bears condemned to a life imprisoned in zoos which can never meet your own high standards.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,
Secretary

PS I extend my best wishes to you and your staff who don't have the option to work at home and who are taking that extra risk at this difficult time to ensure the residents of Edinburgh Zoo and Highland Wildlife Park are well cared for.