

Minutes of the (4th) Zoos Expert Committee Meeting
17 May 2012 London

Present

Committee members: Anna Meredith (**Chair**); Brian Bertram **BB**; John Eddison **JE**; David Price **DP**; David Field **DF**; Stephen Woollard **SW**; Sarah-Jane Brown **SJB**; Deborah Bradfield **DB**

Officials: Jane Withey and Margaret Finn (Defra Secretariat); Alison Seton (Scottish Government) by teleconference.

1. Welcome

Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Defra Lord Taylor of Holbeach visited the Zoos Expert Committee (ZEC) ahead of the meeting. Robin Mortimer, who has overall responsibility for the Committee, including making appointments, on behalf of the Minister, visited later in the day. Both visits were informal and provided the opportunity to meet members of the Committee and find out more about current work.

2. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Sharon Redrobe, Cheryl Williams and Rebeca Garcia (Animal Welfare).

3. Minutes of the Committee meeting 1 February 2012

The minutes were accepted with a minor spelling correction at paragraph 4.4 and an amendment to the date of the next meeting from 24 to 23 October at item 14.

Action point - Secretariat

4. Matters arising

a) BIAZA Elephant Welfare Group (EWG)

The Chair had attended an EWG Workshop in Chester on 3 May. At the workshop the Group discussed progress to date and future plans. During the event the Chair had advised the Group to inject a greater sense of urgency into its work.

5. Inspector Seminar

Future seminars

5.1 Defra explained that there had been initial agreement with AHVLA to hold another inspector only seminar in November 2012. A room had been provisionally booked for 26 November in Bristol. This news was welcomed by the Committee.

Dispensations

5.2 The sub-group had been looking at ways of improving guidance for inspectors on dispensations. Following discussion it was confirmed that it was not part of an inspector's role to make a decision on a dispensation; that lies with the Secretary of State. It was suggested that part of the reason why inspectors had sought guidance about dispensations was because AHVLA had included a question in its appointment letter; this asks inspectors to consider whether the dispensation level is correct for the zoo that is being inspected.

5.3 Overall it was agreed that there was enough guidance on dispensations and no further work was needed by the subgroup at this time. It was suggested that the wording in AHVLA's letter could be amended (for instance to "do you think there is any cause for the dispensation status to be changed?") and that there could be a link from the Good Practice Guide to AHVLA's licensing flowcharts which are to become part of the new ZLA Guidance. Any mention of the dispensation status should be written in the pre-amble to the inspection form.

5.4 Secretariat and the Chair would look into these suggestions.

Action point – Secretariat and Chair

Inspection Forms

5.5 The Chair had circulated the first re-draft of the Inspection Form to other members of the subgroup and Secretariat. Work on this was at a very early stage and a draft would be circulated to ZEC members for comment in due course.

Action point – subgroup

Good Practice Guide

5.6 The Chair asked for comments on the draft Good Practice Guide that had been circulated. A number of suggestions were made including the following:

- it was agreed that although the Guide would also be useful to zoo operators, it was written primarily for inspectors.
- a number of Committee members were concerned that once the initial inspector training period was over there was no mandatory training for inspectors. It was suggested that the Guide could include a line about this, for instance: "It is strongly recommended that inspectors attend any relevant training courses or seminars."
- there was general concern that although the Guide refers to species management guidance etc on the BIAZA and EAZA websites, this information was not always available to zoo inspectors. The Chair agreed to write to BIAZA and EAZA to ask if they would consider giving all Secretary of State Inspectors access to their respective guidelines. The Chair said that she would reword the Guide to reflect that inspectors should make use of species management guidelines, *for instance, BIAZA and EAZA guidelines.*
- another option to be considered was that zoo inspectors could become Associate Members of BIAZA and in this respect would have access to guidelines.

- the Guide should say that an educator working at the zoo should be present at inspections if possible.

5.7 The Chair would produce a redraft of the Guide for consideration by the ZEC.

Action point – Chair

5.8 The Committee requested information about any complaints about inspectors from zoos or local authorities.

Action point – Defra

6. Amendments to ZEC Handbook

a) Progress with Chapter 2 – Conservation and Education

6.1 An updated draft of Chapter 2 had been circulated earlier which incorporated comments made by BB on how collections could be made to be, and be seen to be, wildlife-friendly environments. No further comments were made about this at the meeting.

6.2 There had been a previous suggestion that the chapter could include examples of conservation and education projects in smaller collections. However, it was agreed that instead the chapter could include a link to such projects that are on the EAZA website.

6.3 SW would update the draft and asked that any further suggestions be sent to him by 31 May.

Action point - SW

b) Progress with Chapter 4 - Animal Welfare and its Assessment in Zoos

6.4 JE explained that the Executive Summary was almost complete and would be sent to Secretariat shortly.

6.5 SW had commented previously that Appendix 3, which provides a list of relevant courses, could be deleted. The reasoning behind this suggestion was that there could be a danger of implied endorsement or recommendation of courses or colleges.

6.7 The ZEC agreed with this and suggested instead that the appendix should give links to websites that provide details of relevant courses at different levels (e.g. NVQ, graduate). JE said that he would redraft the appendix as necessary and forward to Secretariat.

Action point - JE

c) Progress on update to Handbook

6.8 Secretariat explained that all of the chapters in the Zoos Forum Handbook had been incorporated into one document. This included the new chapters on legislation and on zoonoses. Once Chapters 2 and 4 had been finalised they too would be included. It was decided that the Handbook would be called the Zoos Expert Committee Handbook.

7. ZEC Documents

Drafts of the ZEC's Strategic Workplan and Annual Report would be forwarded to the Secretariat.

Action point – Chair

Nb Annual Report since submitted

8. AHVLA (Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency) Report

Secretariat said that AHVLA had no issues of concern to report. AHVLA would be involved in the administration and organisation of the Inspector Seminar in November should it go ahead.

9. Research

a) ADAS' review of LAs implementation of ZLA

9.1 SW had updated the ZEC's response paper and circulated it ahead of the meeting. It was agreed that all points of note in the paper had been or were being actioned. However, it was suggested that two issues could be taken forward. One was to find out how authorities in Scotland were implementing the ZLA and the second one to find out which of the local authorities in England and Wales had not responded to ADAS' survey questionnaire. Defra said that it would look into these issues.

Action point - Defra

b) new research topics

9.2 No major new topics were forthcoming. However, any further research work needed by the EWG could be considered.

10. Amendments to Circular and SSSMZP

10.1 Secretariat explained that the informal consultation on the draft elephant addition to the Secretary of State's Standards of Modern Zoo Practice; the Standards generally and Circular 02/2003 had now ended. A number of responses had been received which were being considered.

10.2 A paper had been circulated on the Bibliography to the Standards. Everyone agreed that much of the information contained in the Bibliography was out of date or had been superseded. After discussion it was decided that the Bibliography should be taken out of the Standards. ZEC members were to let Secretariat know by 31 May which items they thought could be removed and whether any new ones could be added. Then it would be decided how this new information could be presented - for instance as a reference guide for all involved in zoo licensing, published as a separate document on the Defra website.

Action point - ZEC

11. PQs and correspondence of interest

Secretariat reported that there had been no PQs or relevant correspondence since the last meeting in February.

12. Liaison with other bodies

a) Liaison Group of the Animal Welfare Advisory Bodies

12.1 The Group met on 9 May. At the meeting the ZEC Chair had been invited to be Chair of the Liaison Group when the current post holder stepped down in November. This was under consideration.

b) Defra-Zoo Liaison Committee

12.2 The Liaison Committee had not put forward any items to report.

13. Dates for future meetings

Meetings were confirmed as 23 October in Bristol and 24 January 2013, possibly in London. Secretariat would circulate some dates for a meeting in May 2013.

14. AOB

a) Born Free EU Zoo Enquiry/CAPS report

14.1 The ZEC had had sight of these reports ahead of the meeting. After discussion, the ZEC concluded that it did not wish to provide advice to Defra on the reports at this time, but would support Defra if there were matters it wished to take forward.

However, it was pointed out by a ZEC member that clarification was required about when a zoo closure direction – under s 16B of the Zoo Licensing Act – should take effect when a mandatory licence condition had been contravened. Defra said that it would consider how best to clarify this issue.

b) Discussion paper on UK Law Relating to Animal Welfare

14.2 The paper had been circulated earlier to the ZEC on behalf of the Liaison Group of the Animal Welfare Advisory Bodies; Secretariat had forwarded on comments from a member of the ZEC. The Chair would be attending a meeting in June to further discuss the paper which was expected to be finalised in November.

c) A zoo licensing training course for local authority officers had been held by Central Bedfordshire Council on 2/3 May. The Chair had given a presentation at the event which had been attended by representatives from many local authorities in England. DB had attended and said that it had been an excellent Seminar. The Chair would write to the CEO of Central Beds commending the course.

Action point - Chair