

Rt Hon David Cameron MP
Prime Minister's Office
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

21 June 2011

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: wild animals performing in circuses

We are writing to you to ask you to urgently introduce a ban on wild animals in circuses in the UK.

The Government announced on the 13th May that it could not introduce such a measure due to a legal challenge under EU law against Austria, where, since 2005 circuses are not allowed to tour with wild animals. Instead, Defra announced that it would introduce a licensing system for circuses using wild animals. However on the 19th May, Minister Jim Paice clarified to the House that this legal challenge had not actually been introduced yet.

In our view this opens the way for a ban in the UK, and we see no reasons why this should not be done as soon as possible.

There is still some debate as to whether the European Circus Association may or may not introduce a case into the courts, but you will surely agree that if the Government stopped legislating because of every threat of court action in Europe, little would get done in our country.

A Backbench Business debate on this issue will take place in the House of Commons on the 23rd of June and it is likely that a motion asking the Government to introduce a ban under Section 12 of the Animal Welfare Act will be put forward for a vote. We call on our colleagues not to fear legal challenges and to support the motion.

The UK has played a historical role in taking a lead for the protection of animals in the world and this characteristic of our nation has a great value to British people. We should lead and Europe will follow our example.

The proposal for a licensing system is a step forward, but falls short of giving wild animals the protection they deserve. Elephants, lions and tigers should simply not be used to perform tricks. There is a wealth of evidence that they suffer physically and psychologically in circuses due to constant travelling, long-term confinement and the coercion required to make them perform.

A licensing system will also be problematic to implement, as it could cost as much as £960 per visit paid taxpayer, according to Defra's Impact Assessment. We believe that this is not money well-spent in the current economic climate, while 7 in 10 British citizens want to see animals out of circuses, according to a Yougov poll released in April by Animal Defenders International.

A number of animal protection groups in the UK have decided to volunteer and to take care of and re-home all of the remaining wild animals still touring in the UK. We should allow them to help and solve the problem of looking after these circus animals.

As Parliamentarians we can testify that this issue is very important to constituents. People in local communities feel very uncomfortable when they see animal circuses coming into their town knowing that animals are enduring much suffering. It is time we banned the use of wild animals in circuses.

We respectfully ask you to please reconsider the Government's decision.

With best wishes,



Neil Parish MP



Zac Goldsmith MP



Penny Mordaunt MP



Tracey Crouch MP