



25/02/2016

Dear Sirs,

The Asian Elephant '*Elephas maximus*' is classified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as 'Endangered' in the wild according to its Red List categories.

Working under the umbrella of the 'European Association of Zoos and Aquaria' (EAZA), Blackpool Zoo, like many other good European zoos, participates in both *ex-situ* and *in-situ* conservation of the animals within our care.

We have a long standing association with Asian elephants both within the zoo (this was one of the first species to be exhibited in the zoo over 40 years ago) and by actively supporting *in-situ* conservation via the 'Biodiversity and Elephant Conservation Trust' (BECT) in Sri Lanka for well over a decade, providing funds and raising public awareness of the work that is carried out in this home range country to educate and assist local people who are affected by the human – elephant conflict in the region.

As a part of the EAZA Elephant 'Taxonomic Advisory Group' (TAG) 'European Endangered Species breeding programme' (EEP) for Asian elephants, Blackpool Zoo follows and endorses the TAG's 'mission statement' for this species:

'All elephants held globally under human care in zoological gardens can be regarded as iconic, flagship animals helping raise the awareness of the plight of the elephant to the zoo going public. Due to their intellect, longevity and social awareness elephants are ambassadors that generate immediate empathy from zoo visitors and while there are no immediate plans to return elephants back to the wild, their role under human care in terms of profiling education, conservation and research cannot be overstated.'

The goals of the elephant TAG are to have a self-sustaining population under human care. Within this remit, social, physical and psychological needs must be adequately catered for and standards of excellence in terms of general husbandry, medical welfare – including research into prevalent disease, along with conservation breeding, are pivotal as the corner to maintaining this species under human care'.



Blackpool Zoo is, therefore, committed to improving the welfare of its elephants both present and future, and, with this in mind, we are planning to build a new, state of the art facility on a large area of previously unused land within the park. The new house and paddock, which will be one of the largest in the UK, will offer an extensive outdoor enclosure with a pool, a grazing field and a spacious indoor area which will exceed welfare recommendations and safety standards for the elephants and their keepers.

Whilst we are committed to the long term future of our current elephant, Kate, whose welfare and well-being is paramount, her future and that of other elephants residing within this new facility will ultimately be decided upon by the EEP for this species.

Blackpool Zoo is certain that, with the development of this new facility, it will not only enhance the current welfare of its existing elephant, but will offer the captive population of elephants within Europe a facility that will help to achieve the aims and target population required to act as a safety net for this iconic endangered species.

Yours Sincerely

Darren Webster
Zoo Director