



Marion Atkinson
Sefton Council Leader
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Ref. Closure of Churchtown aviary

Dear Marion Atkinson,

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I am writing to you on behalf of the international animal welfare and conservation organisation, the Born Free Foundation. Founded in 1984, by Virginia McKenna DBE, Will Travers OBE and Bill Travers MBE, we work tirelessly to ensure that all wild animals, whether living in captivity or in the wild, are treated with compassion and respect and are able to live their lives according to their needs.

I am writing to you to commend the progressive decision Sefton Council has made to close the Churchtown aviary, in Southport, in recognition of developments in our understanding of animal welfare and that the aviary no longer meets the welfare needs of the birds housed within. Our understanding of the welfare needs of animals has progressed significantly since the aviary first came into use, and UK law now recognises that all vertebrate animals, and some invertebrates, are sentient. Birds have particular physical, behavioural and psychological needs that, in our view, cannot be fully met in an aviary such as the one at Churchtown.

Parrots, in particular, are incredibly intelligent, long-lived animals who have complex needs and can suffer significant health and welfare issues in captivity.

Whilst we recognise the nostalgia and fond memories that local residents may have about the aviary, Born Free feels strongly that tradition should never be used as justification or a barrier for improving animal welfare or ending poor welfare practices which may once have been considered socially acceptable.

Should Sefton Council proceed with the closure of the aviary, we would urge the council to ensure all birds are rehomed to conditions which exceed those which the animals have experienced to date. This includes maintaining existing social structures where birds are in bonded pairs or groups. As many of these animals are believed to be surrendered pets, we would also encourage the council to ensure that animals are rehomed on the condition that they are not to breed or be sold, to avoid further perpetuating the trade in wild animals as pets.

Lastly, we would appeal to the council to ensure the space where the aviary is located is transformed into an area which supports native wildlife, including native birds, so that current and future residents have a space to connect with, enjoy, learn about and support native wildlife. Witnessing wild animals in captivity portrays negative educational messaging that animals can be used for our amusement and entertainment. Wildlife should be witnessed in the wild, where it belongs.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Lewis

Captivity Research & Policy Manager

Co-Founder Dame Virginia McKenna DBE | **Executive President** Will Travers OBE | **Managing Director** Karen Botha

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