

£100 million rescue package for England's zoos and aquariums

Zoos and aquariums in England are set to receive up to £100 million to help mitigate the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, Animal Welfare Minister Lord Goldsmith announced today (27 June).

This is a major expansion of a £14 million initial relief fund [announced in May](#) and will run until the end of March 2021 to ensure the necessary long-term support is in place to help with severe financial difficulties.

In England, zoos and aquariums have been able to reopen outdoor areas since 15 June, subject to social distancing measures being in place. From 4 July indoor areas such as cafés and exhibits will be able to follow suit. Allowing these businesses to fully reopen is a vital step towards enabling them to cover some of the cost of animal care.

Throughout the pandemic zoos have continued to ensure animal welfare standards are upheld and animals' health needs are met. This funding will help zoos cover costs relating to animal keeping such as feed, heating and security.

Animal Welfare Minister Lord Goldsmith said:

We have a world-leading zoo and conservation sector, and I know how hard zoos have been working to safeguard the welfare of their animals in the face of real financial hardship and uncertainty.

Allowing zoos to reopen has taken off some of the pressure, but the coronavirus pandemic has left them facing long-term financial problems. This funding will therefore be a lifeline for our zoos and aquariums and ensure the quality of animal care continues over the coming months.

I will continue to work with the zoo and conservation community to ensure they get the support they need.

Chief Secretary to the Treasury Steve Barclay said:

Whilst zoos and aquariums are now able to reopen their doors, we know how difficult the past few months have been. That's why we've been doing everything we can to support them.

This extra £100 million of funding will ensure those affected by the outbreak can continue to care for their animals as well as the important conservation and educational work.

Dr Simon Girling, Chair of the Zoo Experts Committee, said:

The Zoo Experts Committee is pleased that the UK Government has listened to the scientific advice of the Committee and not only provided an animal welfare fund at the start of the pandemic for zoos in financial difficulties associated with the lockdown, but they have now made the move to open all parts of zoos from 4 July with appropriate social distancing for public and animal safety.

ZEC welcomes these moves and believes this funding will ensure zoos are able to generate much-needed income to fund the ongoing care of their animals and much of their valuable conservation work at this challenging time for everyone.

Establishments covered by the Zoo Licensing Act will be able to bid for a portion of the £100 million that has been made available. There are already a number of support schemes already available to zoos, including the Job Retention Scheme, VAT deferral, Business Rates Relief, the Business Interruption Loan schemes, the option to reclaim the costs of Statutory Sick Pay and grant funding of up to £25,000 available through the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund.

The measures will help the sector recover from the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic and follow an unprecedented package of financial support already announced by the government.

Further details on the scheme and how to apply will be provided to the sector in due course.

Notes to editors:

- As with all government grants, applications will need to demonstrate that they adhere to strict requirements on delivering value for public money.
- For further enquiries please contact the Defra group press office on 0330 0416560 or 0345 051 8486 out of hours.

Government unveils £200 million package to help innovative businesses bounce back

- Almost £200 million boost to help businesses across the UK drive forward cutting-edge new tech and recover from the impacts of coronavirus
- government investment to support innovations ranging from AI systems

- managing city traffic flows to the latest reusable packaging materials
- research and development (R&D) intensive businesses urged to apply for funding to turn ingenious ideas into new technologies

Innovative ideas and projects led by companies recovering from the impact of coronavirus will not be lost, thanks to a new £200 million fund launched today (Saturday 27 June).

The government's Sustainable Innovation Fund will be open to companies across all parts of the UK who need urgent financial support to keep their cutting-edge projects and ideas alive.

Funding totalling almost £200 million could go towards developing new technologies focused on making homes and offices more energy efficient to cut bills, creating ground-breaking medical technologies to treat infections and diseases, or reducing the carbon footprint of public transport in our towns and cities.

In a move to support people across the country to establish more 'climate-positive' behaviours, businesses and start-ups could also make use of the fund to develop smart sustainability-focused projects – from apps encouraging people to cut down their food waste to sustainable biodegradable packaging.

The Sustainable Innovation Fund will help power the UK's economic recovery and develop new sustainable opportunities for businesses in any sector following the coronavirus pandemic, while helping the UK meet its ambitions to cut carbon emissions to net zero by 2050.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Our country is home to some of the world's most cutting-edge businesses that turn ingenious ideas into new technologies every day. That's why we're backing our innovators and risk-takers with new investment so they can recover and grow out of the coronavirus pandemic.

Today I am urging businesses in all parts of the UK to come forward and pitch their state-of-the-art ideas to us, so we can work together to power the UK's economic recovery.

Kemi Badenoch, Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, said:

Our ability to innovate will be key to tackling this crisis, driving economic growth and supporting jobs.

This funding, on top of our existing support for innovation, will back businesses in a wide range of sectors including technology, health, transport and clean growth.

Dr Ian Campbell, Executive Chair, Innovate UK said:

Many businesses have successfully, and innovatively, responded to the challenges posed by the coronavirus. Organisations will recover from the pandemic, and as the situation stabilises, we will help businesses build an innovative economy that is viable and resilient. Today we issue the call for more innovators to put forward proposals to help the UK build a sustainable and productive future.

This funding, delivered through Innovate UK, forms part of a wider £750 million package of grants and loans announced in April to support innovative firms. This sits alongside the new £500 million [Future Fund](#), which provides match-funding to private investors, and has already received over 500 applications since its launch on 20 May.

Businesses can apply for support through the Sustainable Innovation Fund by [visiting the Innovate UK website](#) from Monday 29 June.

[Government to protect UK research jobs with major support package](#)

- Research jobs and ground-breaking projects impacted by coronavirus to be protected by 2 new government support packages
- new research funding scheme opens this autumn to cover up to 80% of a university's income losses from a decline in international students
- around £280 million to enable universities to continue their cutting-edge work, such as research into antibiotics resistance and the effects of coronavirus on society

Thousands of highly skilled researchers, scientists and technicians working at UK universities will receive greater job protection thanks to 2 significant support packages announced by Business Secretary Alok Sharma today (27 June).

From this autumn, research-active universities across the UK that have been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic will be able to access long term, low interest loans, supplemented by a small amount of government grants, covering up to 80% of their income losses caused by any actual decline in international students.

This funding will be available to bolster those universities who are taking their own steps to make efficiencies, in line with the rest of the economy, to protect their research bases. In addition, some universities may also be

losing funding from charities and businesses, which goes towards vital medical research. The package will be made available to fund research and high priority projects, such as medical research, in order to support universities to continue to be at the cutting edge of innovation.

Around £200 million in new government investment will be made immediately available to support researchers' salaries and other costs such as laboratory equipment and fieldwork. This will allow universities to retain research talent and protect innovative, ground-breaking projects across the country. UK Research & Innovation will also redistribute up to a further £80 million of existing funding to support research and development (R&D) in our universities.

The 2 support schemes will ensure universities facing difficult financial decisions, in line with the rest of the economy, can offer job security to up-and-coming researchers and are able to progress their cutting-edge work, such as research into the effects of coronavirus on our wider society, antibiotics resistance, and new tech solutions to tackle plastic waste and climate change.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

The brilliance of our talented researchers and scientists has been absolutely critical not only to our medical response to coronavirus but also as we begin to emerge from this pandemic and support the UK's economic recovery.

The support we are putting in place will give our world-leading universities a lifeline by protecting jobs to ensure our best minds can continue discovering new innovations that will benefit us all for generations to come.

Some of the ground-breaking projects benefiting from today's investment will include:

- research into antibiotics resistance, ensuring life-saving drugs and treatments remain effective
- the development of innovative new technologies to tackle climate change, including advanced computing and quantum technology
- solutions tackling the waste caused by the manufacture and use of plastics around the world; and
- work to gain a greater understanding of the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on our wider society, such as the impact of lockdown on people's mental health

R&D investment is critical to the UK economy – every £1 spent delivers £7 in economic and social benefits from helping to attract investment, boosting productivity and creating new jobs.

Science Minister, Amanda Solloway commented:

Coronavirus has shown us all the importance of the UK's world-class R&D ecosystem. It has also highlighted the inspirational dedication of our brilliant scientists and researchers.

This package will protect thousands of highly skilled jobs and ensure the UK's research community continue their vital work to solve some of the most pressing challenges facing our society today, like tackling climate change, unlocking medical discovery and unleashing game-changing new technologies.

Providing financial support for the UK's world-leading research institutions impacted by the coronavirus pandemic is a priority for the University Research Sustainability Ministerial Taskforce, co-chaired by Science Minister Amanda Solloway and Universities Minister Michelle Donelan.

Established in May, the Taskforce is identifying what support is needed to retain research talent and ensure the long-term sustainability of UK's world-class research and development sector.

Universities Minister, Michelle Donelan said:

Our world leading universities and the scientific research they undertake are a truly vital part of the UK's society and our economy and will continue to be so as we start to recover from coronavirus.

We understand the difficulties universities are facing right now, which is why we announced a range of measures last month to ease financial pressures, and now I am delighted we are able to offer universities further financial support to protect vital research.

Professor Duncan Wingham Executive Chair of UKRI's Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) said:

UKRI is acutely aware of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Almost everyone in our research and innovation community is either facing major interruptions to their work, or a major transition to work on the coronavirus pandemic.

The purpose of today's announcement is to help sustain UKRI grant-funded research, research talent and the capability of UK research organisations all of which will underpin the post-pandemic, national recovery. This is vital support for UKRI funded research but will not address all the challenges the sector faces. UKRI continues to work closely with the government on how best to support recovery.

Climate researcher Dr James France from British Antarctic Survey said:

This is very welcome news because my NERC research grant was due to end soon. The disruption caused by coronavirus means that it has been a struggle for me, and colleagues in a similar position, to complete projects on schedule.

This package will give us breathing space to finish our current work on greenhouse gases and climate change properly. I am relieved that we'll have time to publish the results before I need to be looking for my next position.

Christine Lockey, a Post Doctoral Research Assistant in Chemistry at the University of Warwick said:

Today's announcement means that I will be able to complete important research projects, including my work on membrane protein biophysics and immune receptors in cells, that would have otherwise have been significantly affected by the loss of research time due to coronavirus and the associated loss of funding. The package announced today will safeguard my future research career and allow me to continue to progress in my chosen scientific field.

The announcement follows the commitment by the government at this year's budget to increase public investment in R&D to £22 billion each year by 2024/25, putting the UK on the path to increase investment to 2.4% of GDP by 2027.

The government has already committed to supporting university research and last month brought forward £100 million of university research funding by a year to provide immediate financial support.

The University Support Package of loans and grants will cover up to 80% of their income losses caused by an expected decline in international students, compared with overseas student revenue in 2018/19. The package will support up to 100% of non-publicly funded research. Further details, including the conditions attached to the funding, will be available in due course.

[Downing Street statement on Glasgow incident: 26 June 2020](#)

Press release

A statement from Downing Street on the Glasgow incident.



The PM has this afternoon spoken with First Minister Nicola Sturgeon about the incident in Glasgow.

He has also held a meeting with the Home Secretary and senior police officers, in which he was updated. The Prime Minister thanked the Chief Constable of Police Scotland, Iain Livingstone, for the exceptional bravery of his officers at the scene.

The PM's thoughts remain with the injured and their loved ones.

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["Blame game" to end as Divorce Bill receives Royal Assent](#)

- Landmark Bill will ease the impact of unnecessary conflict on couples and their children
- Couples will face a new minimum wait of six months before divorces are granted
- Changes to take effect next year following implementation period

New laws to spare divorcing couples having to apportion blame for the breakdown of their marriage took a step closer this week, as a Bill seeking to reduce family conflict gained Royal Assent.

Currently, one spouse has to make accusations about the other's conduct, such as 'unreasonable behaviour' or adultery, or otherwise face years of separation before a divorce can be granted – regardless of whether a couple has made a mutual decision to separate.

The new laws will instead allow a spouse, or a couple, to apply for divorce by making a statement of irretrievable breakdown. This aims to end the needless "blame game" between couples and parents.

Crucially, a new and extended minimum timeframe of six months from the initial application stage to the granting of a divorce will also be created. This will offer couples the time to reflect and turn back, or where reconciliation is not possible agree important arrangements for the future – such as how best to look after their children.

The changes will not come into effect until later next year to allow careful implementation of the necessary changes to court, online and paper processes.

Justice Secretary and Lord Chancellor Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP said:

The institution of marriage will always be upheld, but when divorce cannot be avoided the law should not exacerbate conflict and harm a child's upbringing.

These new laws will stop separating couples having to make needless allegations against one another, and instead help them focus on resolving their issues amicably.

By sparing them the need to play the "blame game", we are removing the antagonism that this creates so families can better move on with their lives.

The Bill was first introduced in June 2019 after a public consultation and was brought before parliament again following the General Election. It passed its final stage on 17 June, with cross-party backing as well as support amongst family law practitioners.

Juliet Harvey, national chair of Resolution, said:

After more than 30 years of campaigning by our members and others who work to reduce conflict between separating couples, we are delighted that this historic Act will now become a reality.

Lawmakers have played a valuable role in helping make the divorce process kinder and less confrontational, and our members are no longer hindered by an outdated law which encouraged couples to play 'the blame game'.

As a result, practitioners will be better able to support separating families to come to constructive, amicable arrangements that benefit everyone involved, particularly children.

Specifically, the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act will:

- Replace the current requirement to evidence either a conduct or separation 'fact' with the provision of a statement of irretrievable breakdown of the marriage (for the first time, couples can opt to make this a joint statement).

- Remove the possibility of contesting the decision to divorce, as a statement will be conclusive evidence that the marriage has irretrievably broken down.
- Introduces a new minimum period of 20 weeks from the start of proceedings to confirmation to the court that a conditional order of divorce may be made, allowing greater opportunity for couples to agree practical arrangements for the future where reconciliation is not possible and divorce is inevitable.

The new laws seek to align the divorce law process with the government's approach elsewhere in family law – encouraging a forward-looking non-confrontational approach wherever possible, thereby reducing conflict and its damaging effect on children in particular.