

Sustainability Policy for Exmoor Zoological & Conservation Centre

version 2 27/02/2023

As a small charity in a relatively isolated and rural area it is our intention to keep our negative environmental impacts to a minimum whilst we comply with legislation. The way we achieve this is described below. We understand improvements can always be made and that sustainability is a live working policy.

Waste

- Zoo

Animal waste including bedding is sent to landfill through North Devon District Council via a waste removal contract agreement. There are no facilities or sufficient safe space to compost this waste onsite as the runoff and drainage could pollute the surrounding area and attract vermin.

Enrichment items are made from recycled materials, mostly wood or cardboard. These can either be recycled after use or reused.

Our compost heap is used for plant-based material such as browse and fallen leaves.

All tree and hedge work whenever possible is chipped and reused as bedding compost.

To comply with legislation all meat waste from feeding and any cadavers are frozen and removed from site under licence using BG Pearce Ltd, Exeter on individual waste transfer agreements.

Improvements:

The waste recycling particularly the bedding waste could be composted when the problems can be overcome.

- Commercial/Business

All cardboard waste which is recycled using SWM at South Molton with a waste transfer agreement.

All other commercial waste is sent to land fill.

There are no facilities onsite for members of the public to recycle.

When eating in the café members of the public are supplied with plates and cutlery that can be reused.

All takeaway food packaging is biodegradable.

Natural spring water is used for the zoo animals and throughout the zoo and toilet systems. The treated mains water from the authority is just used for washing and human consumption on a separate system.

All septic tank waste (as the premises is not connected to mains due to isolation) is transferred through a waste transfer agreement with Spirebourne Ltd, Tiverton. Limited space available (unless pumped to another location on the premises) means that natural onsite filtration is not an option.

NB: The separation of food waste for composting conflicts with the associated problems of vermin control and would be detrimental to this rural site unless a vermin proof food waste compost area could be constructed.

Improvements:

Provide plastic and aluminium recycling opportunities for the public onsite and arrange for these to be transferred through waste agreements.

Continue to reduce plastic stock onsite, opting for alternatives such as aluminium cans or cartons made from plant-based materials.

NB: Our natural spring water is not sufficiently well filtered to use as drinking water although it does reach the annually tested minimum requirements for human consumption by North Devon District Council.

Sustainable Travel

- Staff

All staff live within 35 miles of the zoo but are spread out from one another making car sharing difficult. When a staff member has accommodation enroute of another, car sharing is encouraged.

Staff carpool to regional meetings and conferences.

Due to the bus schedules in the area public transport to and from the zoo for staff is currently impractical and the roads to and from the zoo are not suitable for bicycles so a compensation scheme for cycling to work or public transport would likely not be taken up.

Computers are located within the office, education office and staff room which have the capacity to enable video conferencing for meetings, however, most meetings take place during working hours to reduce the need for staff to come in on days off.

- Business

The ageing charity van is run on diesel. This will need replacement shortly.

- Public

Public transport routes are displayed on our website, however due to the remoteness of our site most people arrive to us by car. Buses are infrequent and do not bring you directly to the zoo, but a 15-minute walk away down a country lane with no pathway. Our nearest train station is 10 miles away in Barnstaple.

We have one electric car charging point to encourage electric vehicle users to the site.

Improvements:

Updating the company van, possibly to a petrol hybrid, would make it eco-friendlier and more economical.

Offering a discount to cyclists and bus users.

Investing in the provision of a bike shed for cyclist's bikes and equipment including motor cycles..

Energy

1/3rd of the zoo's electricity needs is obtained from our 48Kw solar array located within zoo grounds and advertised to visitors.

- Equipment

To further reduce energy usage motion sensor lighting is installed in all bathrooms and exhibit lighting and heating is run through timers and self-ballast sensors where appropriate.

Infrared heating is being installed as a more efficient way of heating buildings, exhibits and areas.

- Buildings

As facilities and buildings are updated, measures are taken to ensure better insulation and restrict damp.

Mains gas is not available at our site due to our remote location and propane gas is not an economically viable alternative as all the exhibits are connected electrically to a 3-phase power supply.

Improvements:

To continue to use energy saving lights such as LED strip lights wherever practical.

To continue to improve insulation in new build exhibits and commercial areas.

To attempt to invest in a larger solar array as the space is available although electrical capacity may not be in the network.

Water

90% of all water onsite is from our own spring.

Mains water is only used for the cafeteria and human consumption.

Taps in toilets have minimising controls, and toilets have a dual flush.

Improvements

The collection of natural water could be installed in appropriate areas such as education centre and encounter zone. This can be used in dryer periods for cleaning and watering plants when mains water may be necessary.

The zoo's ability to store more natural spring water for us at peak trading in drought or summertime should be improved to decrease the temporary use of mains water.

Procurement

- Zoo

Most animal feed and bedding are sourced from within a 20-mile radius of the zoo, coming from local producers. The exceptions to this are the specialist live insect feeds and frozen meats and cadavers.

The majority of feeds are supplied by Bones a local wholesaler at Hatherleigh in Devon decreasing distribution costs.

All fresh fruit and vegetables are purchased as seconds from a local fruit and veg distributor.

- Commercial

Food is mostly sourced from local suppliers and wholesalers however there are also deliveries from local supermarkets.

When possible soft toys within the gift shop are made from recycled plastic and any plastic toys are not sold unless at least recycled.

Improvements:

Stock more eco-friendly gifts in the shop such as locally made gifts to support local businesses, reduce our carbon footprint, and plastic use.

Try and avoid food products containing palm oil and ensure at a minimum it is certified before stocking.

Education for sustainability

- Internal audiences

This is the role of the Zoo's education team and campaigns are supported and championed by them through talks and signage around the zoo.

Improvements:

Ensure staff, as well as the public, are aware of any sustainability measures that are being used.

Discuss other ways this could be considered, through for example staff meetings.

- External audiences

Sustainability messages

Signs around the zoo highlight the projects we have been a part of through activities such as fundraising, which demonstrate how people from all walks of life have been getting involved in the protection, monitoring and conserving their local environments and wildlife, such as the Yupukari river turtle project and painted dog conservation.

The education team through their education policy annually select a proponent of sustainability to promote for anyone year.

The importance and need for sustainability is mentioned in all of our daily talks to the public, school, and uniform group talks. This is particularly relevant to animals effected by industries such as palm oil, where we are working with Impact Score and promoting their app to help visitors become more sustainable in their daily lives.

Other discussion points at talks include meat consumption and possible alternatives such as invertebrates. Climate change and it's affects on wildlife local and worldwide is discussed at these talks as well.

Improvements:

Signage at taps to highlight water saving and cost cutting tips at home.

Providing recycling opportunities around the zoo

Add to nature trail promoting more of our native wildlife, problems and solutions!

Increasing biodiversity on site, bee hives?