

P-04-593 Advise Schools on visits to Noah's Ark Zoo Farm – Correspondence from Noah's Ark Zoo Farm to the Committee, 03.07.14

FAO Dame Rosemary Butler & the National Assembly Petitions Committee

Dear Sirs

Noah's Ark Zoo Farm, the national award-winning animal park in North Somerset (England), has been informed that an e-petition has been started on the National Assembly website aiming to dissuade Welsh schools from visiting us. It was drawn to our attention by some concerned Welsh teachers who enjoy bringing school groups to us and feel (as we do) that this petition is baseless and unfair.

Under the guise of "Advise schools on visits to Noah's Ark Zoo Farm", the petition is clearly aimed at encouraging your Committee to consider contacting Welsh schools about supposed Creationist education at our park, which the petition leader (Jane Henderson) hopes will put schools off booking a trip.

https://www.assemblywales.org/epetition-list-of-signatories.htm?pet_id=1020

It is important for us to clarify a few key points misrepresented by the Petition. We hope this will help you have all the facts for your consideration.

- Noah's Ark Zoo Farm was awarded the national 'Quality Badge' for education from the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom in December 2013 in recognition of our professional Education Program for schools and our high-quality teaching by trained Education Officers at the zoo.
- We do not teach Creationism in workshops or classes, to suggest otherwise is simply untrue. Our taught workshops for schools are purely national curriculum based and conducted by an Education Officer who has QTS to teach Primary level. We would only hold a workshop on Creation if specifically requested by a school. The Education provision we offer can be viewed on our website here:
<http://www.noahsarkzoofarm.co.uk/pages/education/>
- Noah's Ark Zoo Farm is owned and run by Christian directors. We have some informative wall displays at the park which discuss origins, the diversity of life and the theories which are commonly used to explain the natural world. This includes evolution by natural selection, creation, and Recolonisation Theory. These posters are for public interest, should visitors like to read them – they do not form part of the school teaching resources. We encourage discussion and independent thought.
- There are a small number of atheist campaigners who have attempted to misinform the public and schools with the aim of discouraging visits, citing 'creationism'. One or two celebrity scientists like Prof. Alice Roberts have written heavily biased articles

on the zoo for the British Humanist Association, again to try to push their own agenda. These campaigns have been heavily criticised in the press because of the public misrepresentation of our business and the surprising level of hostility directed at us.

- There is no requirement to be a member of BIAZA (British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums) to operate as a zoo. BIAZA is a useful membership organisation for the exchange of information and animals between members. Out of 350 UK zoos and farm parks, 250 are not members of BIAZA. We are currently non-members but are in regular communication with BIAZA and work with other members frequently. We are in discussion with BIAZA about our reapplication as we plan to rejoin shortly. The reason for our leaving BIAZA in 2009 was due a breakdown in communication between ourselves and the then BIAZA director, and nothing to do with education.

We welcome over 200,000 visitors a year which includes 23,000 school children as part of organised school trips. We're very popular with South Wales schools and enjoy a good relationship with them.

If you'd like to speak to us in more detail, we'd be pleased to. You're also very welcome to visit us if you'd like to see what we offer in person.

Kind regards

Jon Woodward

Communications Manager

Noah's Ark Zoo Farm

Clevedon Road, Wraxall, Bristol, BS48 1PG

Tel: 01275 866904 (Direct) / 01275 852606 (Switchboard) **Fax:** 01275 857080



www.noahsarkzooofarm.co.uk