Desperate reptile market organiser washes up at Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool

Wednesday 23 July, 2025

The Norbreck Castle Hotel, near to Blackpool seafront, has been warned by Blackpool Council that unlawful animal trading would likely take place if a planned, large-scale reptile and amphibian market was allowed on its premises on 10th August 2025.

Numerous venues nationwide have already committed to not hosting reptile markets due to their association with illegal animal trading and animal suffering. The event organiser, the International Herpetological Society (I.H.S.), was recently turned away by a venue for a planned market in Bradford on 22 June 2025, before securing the Norbreck Castle Hotel as an alternative venue.

The proposed market would see thousands of animals offered for sale by dealers from across the country. Blackpool Council has warned that activities at the event would violate the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 and the Pet Animals Act 1951. Trading pet animals over market stalls was banned in 1983 due to animal welfare concerns.

Reptile and amphibian markets are inherently linked to animal suffering. Sensitive and vulnerable wild animals, such as lizards, snakes, and frogs, are typically packaged and displayed in small, plastic takeaway containers as if they were inanimate objects. Their species-specific welfare needs are largely ignored. These animals are deprived of food, water, shelter, and frequently, the ability to move freely.

Says Elaine Toland, Director of the Animal Protection Agency: *“We commend Blackpool Council in taking such a strong stance in protecting animals and upholding the law. It is deeply concerning that this notorious reptile market has found a potential host in the Norbreck Castle Hotel. We strongly urge Britannia Hotels to cancel this event and refuse to be complicit in this sordid trade.”*

Says Laura Walton, Campaigns Manager, Freedom for Animals:

"The practice of cramming thousands of sensitive wild animals into takeaway containers for sale is a gross violation of their welfare. The Norbreck Castle Hotel has a choice: to be a part of this cruelty or to reject it. We sincerely hope they choose the latter."

Says Charlotte Regan, Wildlife Campaigns Manager, World Animal Protection:

"Every single reptile and amphibian for sale at one of these pet markets is a sentient being with the capacity to feel stress, fear, anxiety, frustration and a host of other complex emotions. They are not products to be bought and sold at makeshift stalls. These kinds of events are outdated and have no place in modern society.”

Blackpool Council has been praised for its proactive stance in cautioning the Norbreck Castle Hotel about the market. The Norbreck Castle Hotel and its parent company Britannia Hotels Ltd are no strangers to controversy. In October 2023, consumer group Which? declared Britannia Hotels to be the worst hotel chain in the United Kingdom for the 11th consecutive year.

The Animal Protection Agency, World Animal Protection and Freedom for Animals are working together towards an end to the inhumane trading of wild animals at markets.

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