

Reptile traders given the benefit of the Dowty

Thursday 1 August, 2024

Reptile market organisers recently sent packing by the Churchdown Community Centre, Gloucester have now found a foothold at the Dowty Sports & Social, Down Hatherley Ln, Gloucester GL2 9QH. The South West Reptile Club (SWRC) market was left homeless after the Churchdown Community Centre took the responsible decision to cancel following advice from Tewkesbury Council that the event was likely to involve illegal animal selling. Animal groups are surprised that the Dowty Sports & Social Club plan to proceed with the event on 10th August 2024, given the recent history of the market.

The trading of pet animals at market stalls was outlawed in 1983, as even minimal animal welfare standards cannot be achieved in the temporary, makeshift conditions of a market. In the busy, stressful environment, sensitive exotic animals are boxed up and displayed in small, plastic tubs without food, water or hiding spaces. Essential temperature, humidity and lighting controls are given little to no consideration and scientific research has shown that in such crude conditions, animal suffering is inevitable.

If the event on 10th August 2024 proceeds, it will not have been the first time that the Dowty Sport & Social has hosted a reptile market. The SWRC staged a reptile market on their premises last December, which animal groups claim involved illegal animal selling based on evidence they gathered. Bizarrely, the Dowty Sports & Social facebook's page even features images of reptiles in small plastic containers, with last year's event described as "something a little different!"

Following the event's cancellation at the Churchdown Community Centre, the Animal Protection Agency (APA) emailed dozens of venues in the area to warn that reptile market organisers would be seeking a new venue. Last week the General Manager at the Dowty Sports & Social responded by email claiming they had not been approached to host such an event but APA has since confirmed a tip off that the venue is planning to stage another reptile event.

Says Elaine Toland, Director, Animal Protection Agency:

"The mistreatment of animals at reptile markets inevitably sparks public outcry. Why would any venue knowingly facilitate or wish to be associated with this? There is a strong possibility that animal sellers will be prosecuted if the event proceeds and the Dowty Sports & Social may be left to deal with the reputational fallout."

Says Laura Walton, Campaigns Manager, Freedom for Animals:

"We are shocked to hear that the Dowty Sports & Social has agreed to host this event; one which has previously been evidenced to involve illegal animal selling. The stress inflicted on animals transported and displayed at these events is precisely why trading pet animals at markets was banned. Many venues have already done the right thing and distanced themselves from such exploitative activities, and so we are calling on the Dowty Sports & Social to follow suit."

Reptile markets also pose a significant public health concern given the high risk of germs transferring from animals to people and the post-event contamination of venues. Salmonella infection from reptiles can have particularly serious consequences where vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly are concerned.

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