

Rotherham Council urged to prosecute wild animal traders operating at the Magna Science Adventure Centre

Thursday 29 August, 2024

Animal protection groups are calling on Rotherham MBC to take decisive steps to prosecute reptile and amphibian traders operating at events hosted by the Magna Science Adventure Centre. The Animal Protection Agency and Freedom for Animals have gathered evidence of what they believe to be unlawful animal selling at markets that took place on 16 June 2024 and 17 September 2023. A further reptile and amphibian market is planned for 1st September 2024 and campaigners are calling on the Magna Science Adventure Centre to ensure it is the last one they host.

Trading in pet animals at market stalls was banned in 1983 for animal welfare reasons as it was felt that animal welfare could not be safeguarded in such makeshift conditions. Captive reptiles and amphibians need environments that replicate their natural living conditions. But at exotic pet markets, these animals are housed in small, sterile plastic boxes without food and water, and the necessary controlled temperature, humidity and lighting levels.

In over forty years there has only been one prosecution for the offence of trading in pet animals over market stalls, which highlights a significant failing in local authority monitoring and regulation. Large and small venues, however, are turning away reptile markets due to the animal welfare and legal issues surrounding them. Animal groups are calling on Rotherham MBC and the Magna Science Adventure Centre to take a firm stance against unscrupulous animal dealers operating through these events.

Says Elaine Toland, Director, Animal Protection Agency:

“Trying to replicate the wild environment for these animals in zoo-like enclosures is extremely challenging, if not impossible but in small plastic tubs at these one-day events it is out of the question. The suffering caused to the animals is unimaginable and unnecessary, and the law is in place to stop this form of trading but only if it is properly enforced.”

Says Laura Walton, Campaigns Manager, Freedom for Animals:

“These markets present significant welfare issues for reptiles and amphibians. The stressful transportation, confined spaces, inappropriate lighting and temperatures, heightened noise and lack of refuge, alongside the increased handling and interaction from event attendees creates an incredibly stressful environment for these extremely sensitive animals. It is unacceptable, and more must be done to protect these animals from harm.”

Says Dr Charlotte Regan, Wildlife Campaign Manager, World Animal Protection:

“Reptile markets are inherently associated with a number of highly concerning animal welfare issues. Reptiles and amphibians are sentient animals, capable of experiencing a range of emotions and feelings, such as pleasure, pain, joy, and fear. It is not acceptable to compromise their welfare so that they can be bought and sold like products over market stalls. We call on the Magna Science Adventure Centre to stop hosting these outdated and controversial events”

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