

11<sup>th</sup> February 2016

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about wild animals in circuses.

I know that the Government remains fully committed to introducing a ban on wild animals in circuses and supported the Private Member's Bill, the Wild Animals in Circuses Bill, in the last Parliament.

I had hoped that this Bill could have made progress before the General Election, but unfortunately this was not possible owing to a lack of parliamentary time. As stated in the Conservative Party manifesto, the Government is committed to introducing a ban in this Parliament.

Currently, the ban stands to impact two travelling circuses in England that now operate with only a small number of wild animals. Conditions of the remaining wild animals at both circuses are closely monitored under Defra's interim Welfare of Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (England) Regulations 2012, through regular announced and unannounced welfare inspections.

The draft Bill states that an offence would be committed under the law if an animal 'performs or is exhibited' as part of a travelling circus, a term whose definition is well understood. There is no exemption for businesses claiming that the exhibition is 'for educational purposes' or similar. In any case of doubt, the Bill also allows for the appointment of inspectors who could make a final determination.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Alok Sharma MP**