

D U B L I N



200



VISION 2021-2031

A conservation organisation of national and global impact



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One hundred and ninety years on, Dublin Zoo continues to play an important role as a much loved and valued institution in Ireland and we are delighted to articulate our vision to support the countdown to our bicentennial in 2031. This document describes a very ambitious, and we believe achievable, 10-year vision for Dublin Zoo. It sets out our direction to make the leap from a zoo that Dubliners can be proud of, to a national cultural attraction, with conservation and animal welfare at its core while continuing the great journey started 190 years ago, but with the vision to become a zoo-based conservation organisation of global significance.

Our purpose, as set out here, is to save wildlife and inspire a passion for nature: a place where our visitors become active conservationists and help us achieve the vision of a world where people live in harmony with nature.

This document provides context for our strategic plans by giving some insights into our 190-year history and noting the developments which

This document describes a very ambitious, and we believe achievable, 10-year vision for Dublin Zoo to support the countdown to our bicentennial in 2031: To become a zoo-based conservation organisation of global significance.

have created the platform on which we will move forward. Covid-19 has been one of the greatest challenges the Zoo has faced. In “Our Challenges and Opportunities” we set out the impact of the closures and the related learnings which have inspired us to think more boldly. Our path to 2031 is underpinned by two key enablers; our most treasured resource, our people – both employees and volunteers; and by our goal to achieve financial sustainability.

Our 10-year vision is set out in detail in the main section of this document. In summary, this vision is built on five objectives, each based on a set of strategic imperatives:

A NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SPECIES SURVIVAL

1. SAVING WILDLIFE IN IRELAND AND GLOBALLY

- Create a National Centre for Species Survival at Dublin Zoo
- Increase our contribution to saving wildlife and habitats, both in Ireland and globally
- Increase the conservation contribution of Dublin Zoo’s animal collection

DIVERSITY OF LIFE

2. A CUTTING-EDGE ZOO INSPIRING A PASSION FOR NATURE

- Create a holistic visitor experience for all seasons
- Engage a more diverse audience, reflecting the diversity of Ireland
- Inspire more Irish and international visitors
- Increase visitor revenue

CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP

3. LEADING OUR SECTOR TO ACHIEVE HIGHER IMPACT

- Drive the zoo community’s conservation and education mission
- Influence conservation policy
- Fundraise €10m for capital investment

A HUB FOR DISCOVERY AND LEARNING

4. CULTIVATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSERVATIONISTS

- Engage 75,000 learners per year across all our education programmes by the end of this 10-year plan
- Develop third-level education programmes in partnership with local universities

WE ARE DUBLIN ZOO

5. OPERATING A SUSTAINABLE VISITOR ATTRACTION

- Develop and embed a sustainability strategy for Dublin Zoo
- Reduce our environmental impact




Ann Keenan
President, Zoological Society of Ireland



Dr Christoph Schwitzer
Chief Executive, Dublin Zoo





We are Dublin Zoo, Ireland's national zoo and one of the most-visited cultural attractions on the island of Ireland. Caring for animals is not just what we do — it's who we are.

OUR PURPOSE

We are Dublin Zoo, Ireland's national zoo and one of the most-visited cultural attractions on the island of Ireland. Caring for animals is not just what we do – it's who we are. For almost 200 years we have been at the heart of the community as the place for Irish people to learn about and connect with wildlife.

We are part of a global network of conservation organisations committed to protecting species and their habitats. With the aspiration that our visitors become active conservationists, our purpose is to save wildlife and inspire a passion for nature – one person, one family at a time. Our vision is a world where people live in harmony with nature.

Connecting people with wildlife from an early age creates a strong awareness of environmental responsibility. Dublin Zoo fosters education and promotes learning, but doesn't feel like school. We are a world-class visitor attraction, a social space and a learning hub, all at the same time, providing engaging experiences with animals and initiating adventures. We create and share knowledge to save wildlife and habitats.

This 10-year vision for Dublin Zoo takes us to our bicentennial in 2031 and sets out our direction to make the leap from a zoo that Dubliners can be proud of, to a national cultural attraction that defines the future of

zoos globally. With the world's ecoregions as the guiding principle and animal welfare as our mandate, we will develop exemplary immersive animal habitats alongside a first-class visitor infrastructure to create an exceptional and participatory visitor experience for all. Environmental sustainability of our operations will be paramount. Through these activities, we contribute to achieving the objectives of the Dublin City Development Plan 2016–2022 and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The boldest part of our vision is to become a conservation organisation of global impact within a decade. Providing the headquarters for our parent charity, the Zoological Society of Ireland, our ambition is for Dublin Zoo to transform into a leading hub for wildlife conservation of national and global significance.

This includes an animal collection of high conservation relevance, linked to conservation action in the wild, both in Ireland and internationally. We also aim to become a national focal point for species conservation status assessment and planning, influencing policy development globally to create a world where people live in harmony with nature.

Our vision can only be achieved with the continuing support from the Irish Government, Dublin City Council, the Office of Public Works and, first and foremost, the people of Ireland, who built our Zoo.



OUR IMPACT: THE FIRST 190 YEARS

Dublin Zoo is the fourth-oldest zoo in the world. It opened 190 years ago, on the 1 September 1831, on a 1.6-hectare site in the Phoenix Park. It remains in the same location to this day, albeit on a much larger footprint of 28 hectares.

The Zoological Society of Ireland was founded a year earlier in 1830. Its voluntary Board has overseen the operation of the Zoo since its foundation, ensuring best practice is employed in all areas of our operations while meeting our charitable objectives. In 1979, the Society started developing Fota Wildlife Park in Cork to provide space for keeping and breeding larger groups of animals while marking the Zoo's 150th anniversary. The park opened in 1983.

From the very beginning, animal welfare has been central to Dublin Zoo's mission. The Zoo's founder, Sir Philip Crampton (1777–1858), said in his foundation speech:

“To cultivate a kindly disposition towards animals, it is only necessary to know them. An intimate knowledge of their characters, disposition, and talents, may... tend to abate that spirit of cruelty and selfishness which leads us to seek amusement in the suffering and destruction of the most beautiful, harmless, and happy of sentient beings.”

Successive generations of Dublin Zoo keepers have continuously refined and reinvented the way that we care for our animals. Today, animal welfare remains our mandate, the foundation stone of our vision. It is hoped that our 10-year plan will build on the impressive achievements of colleagues, past and present, to ensure that Dublin Zoo remains at the forefront of animal welfare, wildlife conservation, and education.

OUR ANIMALS

Dublin Zoo's animal collection was founded with a gift of animals received from London Zoo in 1831. Since its foundation, the collection has focused mainly on large mammals, including big cats, great apes, elephants and hippos. It is not widely known that in 1854, the Zoo opened what was the world's second public aquarium while pioneering the use of aeration for its fish tanks.

Today, the Zoo cares for over 400 animals of more than 70 species. The collection is organised along biogeographic regions. Species kept at Dublin Zoo are selected following a rigorous process laid out in our collection plan, which aligns with regional collection plans coordinated by the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA).

Among the selection criteria are the population viability and conservation status of a species in the wild, its management in cooperative breeding programmes, as well as the standard of welfare that we can provide. Our guiding principle is to maximise the contribution of our collection to conservation.

CONSERVATION BREEDING

From the 1850s, at a time when animal breeding in zoos was not commonplace, and zoo stock were traditionally replenished through imports from the wild, Dublin Zoo started to breed lions so successfully that it became known as the 'Irish lion industry'. Back then, the offspring would normally be sold to other zoos or swapped for other animals.

Today, more than half the species in our collection are part of internationally managed conservation breeding programmes. These include our successful breeding group of Asian elephants, our Bornean orangutans, western lowland gorillas, western chimpanzees, Asiatic lions, snow leopards, Amur tigers, okapis, Nubian giraffes and African wild dogs.

These programmes aim to maintain genetically and demographically healthy reserve populations that can function as reservoirs for restocking of declining wild populations where required. In 2020, Dublin Zoo bred 24 animals as part of breeding programmes, two thirds of which from species that are among the most threatened on the planet. These are classified as 'Endangered', 'Critically Endangered' or 'Extinct in the Wild' on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List.

Dublin Zoo staff coordinate the conservation breeding programmes for Goeldi's monkeys, Moluccan and citron-crested cockatoos at European level, maintaining regional databases and chairing international expert committees for these species.

SUPPORTING FIELD CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH

Dublin Zoo helps fund conservation action in the field for the most threatened species in our care – over a quarter of our collection. We

support 20 field conservation projects run by partner organisations in as many countries on three continents, with particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

In Ireland, we provide support to four partner organisations that work to protect a range of native species and their habitats. In addition, Dublin Zoo helps build global capacity for integrated conservation planning through our support of the IUCN Conservation Planning Specialist Group. We are also a partner of the Frozen Ark project, a worldwide network of animal biobanks that collects and preserves genetic material from endangered species.

Dublin Zoo staff contribute to international multi-zoo research projects and also undertake their own research in collaboration with other organisations and universities. While the focus of our scientific work is on zoo biology, projects cover a range of topics including conservation biology, veterinary medicine and visitor studies.

The principles that guide our research are the benefit to the animals in our care, and the benefit to the Zoo by advancing our conservation and education purpose. We also facilitate graduate and undergraduate student research projects.

ANIMAL HABITATS AND LANDSCAPING

Central to Dublin Zoo's philosophy is respect for the living planet. We aim to inspire in our visitors a passion for wildlife and a commitment to protecting it, while creating lasting memories. Key to our visitor experience is keeping our animals in species-appropriate social groups and presenting them in the most natural way possible by simulating wild habitats.

Importantly, we want our visitors to experience not just animals, but animal life, and to gain an understanding of the animals' adaptation to their ecosystems.

The original part of the Zoo is largely devoted to the biogeographic regions of Asia and the Neotropics, while the land around the upper lake showcases sub-Saharan Africa. Some of our more recent animal habitats, created following the concept of habitat immersion developed by Jones & Jones Architects, have attracted international attention and approval. The Gorilla Rainforest, opened in 2011, was cited by the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums as an example of how to design zoo habitats with the highest animal welfare standards in mind.

DUBLIN ZOO'S REACH

Dublin Zoo is the most-visited family attraction on the island of Ireland. Over the last 190 years, we have welcomed almost 60 million visitors. The Zoo provides a gateway for people, particularly in urban areas, to engage with nature and wildlife. 2019 was the ninth year in a row that Dublin Zoo achieved more than one million visitors. Annually, a quarter of a million people come to see our winter event 'Wild Lights'. Young families are our main audience, accounting for over 80% of our visitors, and the majority of children who visit the Zoo are under the age of five. Our visitors spend on average

3.2 hours with us. The City and Dublin County account for 49% of our visitors.

Public relations is central to broadening our reach. We had more than €4m worth of media coverage in 2020, and there were over 16 million opportunities across all media to see and hear about us. The popular RTÉ television series 'The Zoo' underpins the social license under which we operate. It showcases our conservation journey and highlights different aspects of the Zoo's operation, including studbook keeping, animal transfers, breeding, veterinary care and field conservation. The series continues to engage wide audiences and had on average 293,000 viewers per episode over its ten seasons between 2010 and 2020.

In recent years, Dublin Zoo's social media accounts have been an integral part of our marketing, allowing us to directly engage with our audiences on a large scale. In 2020, our Facebook page reached 31.7m, our Twitter page 5.9m and our Instagram page 9.6m people, with a constant 4–5% engagement rate. Our following on these platforms has grown by 12–98% over the last three years.

Over the last 190 years, we have welcomed almost 60 million visitors. The Zoo provides a gateway for people, particularly in urban areas, to engage with nature and wildlife. 2019 was the ninth year in a row that Dublin Zoo achieved more than one million visitors.

We provide an accessible and enjoyable day out for all, and each year over 20,000 visitors avail of our concession prices for people with additional needs and their carers. We accommodate groups of individuals with ill health, homeless groups and asylum seekers, and offer reduced rates to schools in the Government's 'Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools' (DEIS) support programme.

For 14 years, Zoo staff and volunteers hosted 'Dream Night', a special evening for 80 families from two children's hospitals. We also offer VIP tours for terminally ill children and adults to create memories they can cherish with their families.

DISCOVERY AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Dublin Zoo plays a vital role in educating visitors about the natural world. If conservation is to succeed, zoos must inspire people to care about animals and learn how to protect habitats globally. Our Discovery and Learning Department reaches approximately 60,000 learners every year with formal school programmes, community outreach programmes, weekend and school holiday programmes as well as engagement with concession groups.

In 2019, we engaged 26,000 students in face-to-face education programmes, an increase of 50% on 2010. There are opportunities for further growth and to expand our reach via virtual learning programmes, which were developed in 2020 in response to our closure during Covid-19. Post-pandemic, we are broadening our range of face-to-face and virtual learning programmes which will support us in providing wider access to conservation education at home and abroad.

The Zoo's volunteer programme is well established and it has a strong spirit of public engagement and education. The original group of 12 brought in to support the education officer in 1987 has evolved into a team of over 120 people who deliver on-site educational public-engagement activities.

Dublin Zoo plays a vital role in educating visitors about the natural world. If conservation is to succeed, zoos must inspire people to care about animals and learn how to protect habitats globally.





OUR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The 242-day closure of Dublin Zoo over three national lockdowns in 2020/21, resulting from Covid-19, has been one of the greatest challenges we have faced. However, it has also reaffirmed our relevance in the hearts and minds of the Irish people as an important and much-loved national institution.

We now have an opportunity to build on this relevance to ensure that our stakeholders, the Irish public and policymakers alike, are aware of our purpose as a conservation and education charity and join us in achieving our vision of a world where people live in harmony with nature. Dublin Zoo will become a National Centre for Species Survival. With wild habitats shrinking globally, and extinction risk increasing for vast numbers of species, this is more important than ever.

VISITOR TRENDS AND SEASONALITY

Dublin Zoo is predominantly an outdoor attraction with relatively few indoor amenities compared to other major zoos, and as a result, visitation is highly seasonal. The bulk of our revenue is generated between June and August, but further growth during this period is limited by external factors such as car parking capacity in the Phoenix Park.

In order to grow visitation, we will need to focus on our traditional off-peak periods. Our 10-year vision emphasises the creation of attractive indoor spaces for animals and visitors, thereby increasing dwell time and turning the Zoo into an all-weather, all-season attraction. A challenge will be to find additional footfall drivers in traditional low-visitation months with more inclement weather.

Pre-Covid, the Irish visitor economy has seen strong growth in recent years and Dublin Zoo's visitor numbers have grown accordingly. Competition from other cultural and leisure attractions is increasing, yet the strength of our brand has shielded us from their effects. We already reach a large proportion of the domestic family market, though continued growth in this segment will be limited by Ireland's relatively small population size. Our opportunities are to entice additional domestic market segments such as young adults and over-65s, and to invest in creating a brand profile overseas to attract international tourists.

Notably, 88% of our visitors are from ABC1 backgrounds, against only 54% in the overall population. We must proactively reach out to people from all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds and build an audience that is truly diverse.

CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS

In a relatively short span of time, Dublin Zoo has grown from a 600,000 to a 1.25m visitor attraction. This has brought logistical challenges that we need to overcome to meet increasingly sophisticated consumer expectations. Visitors compare Dublin Zoo to zoos and theme parks in the United States and Australia rather than to our competitors in Ireland.

Upgrading our catering offer, including a new main park restaurant in a more central location, designing contemporary playgrounds for children of all ages, as well as increasing our retail space, will improve people's experience of the Zoo. Investing to create a modern visitor infrastructure while maintaining high standards of customer care and service in our ongoing operations will require careful planning and implementation.

Dublin Zoo will become a National Centre for Species Survival. With wild habitats shrinking globally, and extinction risk increasing for vast numbers of species, this is more important than ever.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION...

Throughout our 190-year history, Dublin Zoo has resided in the Phoenix Park, one of the largest urban parks in Europe. This prime location in the green lung of the capital, close to the hustle and bustle of Dublin's city centre, yet teeming with biodiversity, brings with it great responsibility for the historic estate and landscapes in our custodianship, but also has challenges.

Dublin Zoo does not own the land that it is built on and therefore has no significant assets. The limited car parking spaces in the Phoenix Park are not owned or managed by the Zoo, which means our visitors share them with other park users and commuters. Plans to reduce commuter traffic through the park may see a further reduction in kerbside parking spaces along with the introduction of access restrictions through some of the park gates. Good relationships with our neighbours, with the Office of Public Works and with our political stakeholders will be vital to operating an attraction that remains accessible to all.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Dublin Zoo is highly reliant on visitor revenue. This makes us particularly vulnerable to events that affect the local and international tourism economy, as exemplified by Covid-19 that set us back by two years in our capital programme. Increasing utility costs and high insurance premiums relating to personal injury claims are reducing our operating surplus and adversely affecting delivery of our charitable objectives. Diversifying our income and growing revenue through fundraising and developing partnerships with profit-share models, for example in third-level education, is part of our 10-year vision.





THE PATH TO 2031: OUR ENABLERS

This 10-year plan is underpinned by two key enablers that are critical to our success: the people who work and volunteer at Dublin Zoo; and a sound financial plan to support the delivery of our strategic objectives.

THE PEOPLE THAT MAKE THE CHARITY

Our most treasured resource is our people, both employees and volunteers. We employ around 133 staff in 104 full-time positions that range from zoo keeper to horticulturist, from accountant to retail assistant. Some of our colleagues are second generation Zoo workers, and many have decades of experience. All are highly committed to Dublin Zoo and live and breathe our purpose and vision.

We are committed to attracting and retaining the talent and expertise that makes us unique and is needed to deliver our 10-year strategic plan. We want to create a strong and positive organisational culture that defines who we are and how we conduct our business. This is key to the wellbeing and satisfaction of all at Dublin Zoo.

We will provide purposeful leadership built on clear strategy and structure, and enhance our internal communication channels to create broad engagement and empowerment. In particular, as well as continuing to engage with focussed staff working groups, we will introduce different meeting opportunities to ensure that people are listened to and that we avoid silos.

We will continue to invest in the development of our employees through certified training courses and by enabling staff to attend relevant conferences. To do this, we will establish a dedicated Staff Development Fund.

SUSTAINABLE FINANCES

We want to have sufficient funding in place to support the delivery of our 10-year plan. We will maximise existing income streams, particularly through growing our visitor numbers and improving our catering and retail facilities. We will also explore new opportunities for income generation, such as events, animal experiences and third-level education partnerships.

We will use strong financial management, innovation and new ways of working to continue optimising our cost base. With these measures, we will ensure that we can deliver a sustainable annual operating surplus, maintain our competitive relevance and maximise our potential. A capital fundraising strategy will reduce our high dependency on visitor income for funding strategic investments in the Zoo's infrastructure.

Our most treasured resource is our people, both employees and volunteers... All are highly committed to Dublin Zoo and live and breathe our purpose and vision.

OUR 10-YEAR VISION: DUBLIN ZOO 200

Our 10-year vision for Dublin Zoo is built on five objectives that embody and advance our purpose to save wildlife and inspire a passion for nature – one person, one family at a time.

A NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SPECIES SURVIVAL

1. SAVING WILDLIFE IN IRELAND AND GLOBALLY

DIVERSITY OF LIFE

2. A CUTTING-EDGE ZOO INSPIRING A PASSION FOR NATURE

CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP

3. LEADING OUR SECTOR TO ACHIEVE HIGHER IMPACT

A HUB FOR DISCOVERY AND LEARNING

4. CULTIVATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSERVATIONISTS

WE ARE DUBLIN ZOO

5. OPERATING A SUSTAINABLE VISITOR ATTRACTION

To realise our vision we must achieve a paradigm shift from operating a zoo that also supports conservation, to becoming a zoo-based conservation organisation of national and global impact.

This will require more investment in our conservation, science and third-level education activities, for which we will explore new avenues of funding and new partnerships. At the same time, we must continue to invest in the further physical development of the Zoo to achieve and maintain the highest standards in animal welfare and visitor infrastructure and to grow our visitor numbers.

By 2031, the year of Dublin Zoo's bicentennial:

- We will have engaged in partnerships and created a National Centre for Species Survival at Dublin Zoo, headquartered in Society House, with the capacity for species conservation assessment, conservation planning and action. Our contribution to saving wildlife, both in Ireland and globally, will have increased significantly
- We will have increased the proportion of species in Dublin Zoo's animal collection that are subject to conservation breeding programmes, or for which we support conservation planning or field conservation activities, from 54% to 75%
- We will have reaffirmed and realised the physical development plan for Dublin Zoo and created a holistic visitor experience, inspiring a passion for nature by combining modern immersive animal habitats with a world-class visitor infrastructure. The Zoo will be on its way to becoming an all-weather attraction, with improved indoor habitats that allow for a longer dwell time
- Improved catering and retail facilities and new commercial partnerships will have generated more income
- Our audience will be more diverse across age groups and ethnicities, reflecting the diversity of Dublin and Ireland
- We will have inspired more Irish and international guests to visit, and visitor revenue will have increased
- Dublin Zoo will have become a leader in our sector at European and global level. We will be using our political influence for conservation advocacy and to drive policy change

- Our fundraising campaign will have generated €10m for capital investment into animal habitats and visitor infrastructure
- We will be engaging 75,000 learners per year across all our education programmes (an increase of 25%) and will have developed our virtual education provision to increase our reach
- A new partnership model with universities will be in place to jointly develop third-level programmes in conservation science and cultivate the next generation of conservationists
- We will have embedded a sustainability strategy for Dublin Zoo and gradually reduced our environmental impact
- We will have continued to invest in the wellbeing and development of our employees and volunteers

To realise our vision we must achieve a paradigm shift from operating a zoo that also supports conservation, to becoming a zoo-based conservation organisation of national and global impact.





A NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SPECIES SURVIVAL

1. SAVING WILDLIFE IN IRELAND AND GLOBALLY

Our ambition is to shift paradigms, from operating a zoo that also supports conservation, to becoming a zoo-based conservation organisation of global significance under the brand of our governing body, the Zoological Society of Ireland. We want to create a national hub for species survival at Dublin Zoo and achieve a fivefold growth in our conservation input and impact over the life of this vision.

Our strategic imperatives are to:

- **Create a National Centre for Species Survival at Dublin Zoo**
- **Increase our contribution to saving wildlife and habitats, both in Ireland and globally**
- **Increase the conservation contribution of Dublin Zoo's animal collection**

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SPECIES SURVIVAL

Over the last 20 years, Dublin Zoo has built up a portfolio of domestic and international field conservation projects that we support financially and are linked to species in our collection. Over the next decade, we want to increase our conservation impact and assume an action-driven, leadership role in the conservation of wildlife, as mandated by the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy (WAZA, 2015).

Early in the life of our 10-year vision, we want to build strategic partnerships with organisations such as the IUCN's Species Survival Commission, in particular its Red List Unit and its Conservation Planning Specialist Group, as well as with Irish universities and

conservation groups, with the aim of creating a national conservation planning and red-listing hub for Ireland at Dublin Zoo. Society House, restored to its 1860s splendour, will provide the headquarters for the centre and for the conservation work of the Zoological Society of Ireland, the governing body of both Dublin Zoo and Fota Wildlife Park. We will combine capacity for the full cycle of conservation assessment, planning and action while exploring additional sources of funding for this venture, including statutory funding.

INVESTING INTO EVIDENCE-BASED SPECIES AND HABITAT CONSERVATION

We will increase our financial support for field conservation and science fivefold within the ten-year timeframe covered by our plan. Our investment will see us turn from a supporter into a proactive conservation leader. Dublin Zoo's conservation story is best told through the animals in our collection, and maintaining the link between our animals and the conservation work in the wild will ensure that we take our visitors along on our journey. We want the Zoo to become a recognised leader in the conservation of native Irish species and their habitats, and to provide a hub for synergies between organisations that share our vision. This will include managing the 28-hectare inner-city Dublin Zoo site as a quality habitat for native species, feeding into existing strategies such as the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021–2025.

Our 10-year vision will see us develop institutional research priorities, focussing on evidence-based conservation and animal welfare science. We will identify key stakeholders and potential funding opportunities, and increase dissemination of research results through appropriate channels, aiming for peer-reviewed publications wherever possible.

Over the life of this plan, we will run at least three behaviour change campaigns focussing on issues where people in Ireland can make a direct difference. Visitors to Dublin Zoo will become advocates for the natural world.

CONSERVATION BREEDING

We will grow the conservation contribution of Dublin Zoo's animal collection by increasing the proportion of species that are part of managed conservation breeding programmes or for which we support conservation planning or field conservation activities, from 54% to 75%. Emphasis will be placed on those species for which the zoo population plays a direct conservation role, such as restocking or head-starting of wild populations, following the IUCN's One Plan Approach. Similarly, we will proactively identify native species that may benefit from *ex situ* management and work with the relevant statutory agencies to bring about mandates to aid their conservation.

CHANGING PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOURS

We will make conservation issues relevant to our visitors' lives and inspire people to choose pro-environmental behaviours and to take direct and indirect action for species, habitats, and communities. Over the life of this plan, we will run at least three behaviour change campaigns focussing on issues where people in Ireland can make a direct difference. Visitors to Dublin Zoo will become advocates for the natural world. We will lead by example and demonstrate our positive contribution to conservation and sustainability to our audiences along the visitor journey.



DIVERSITY OF LIFE

2. A CUTTING-EDGE ZOO INSPIRING A PASSION FOR NATURE

We want to continue the transformation of Dublin Zoo that started in the early 2000s, into a cutting-edge visitor attraction for all seasons, showcasing the diversity of life and providing the highest standards of welfare to the animals in our care. A zoo that the people of Ireland can be proud of.

Our aim is to engage more than 1.5m people every year by the end of this plan and increase the number of visitors from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

Our strategic imperatives are to:

- **Create a holistic visitor experience for all seasons**
- **Engage a more diverse audience, reflecting the diversity of Ireland**
- **Inspire more Irish and international visitors**
- **Increase visitor revenue**

AN ALL-WEATHER ZOO FOR ANIMALS AND PEOPLE

Over the last two decades, Dublin Zoo's capital investment has concentrated on creating state-of-the-art, immersive outdoor animal habitats set in naturalistic landscapes. In contrast, many of the Zoo's indoor habitats are either not on public view or purely functional and of low exhibition value. Over the next decade, we will reaffirm and continue to implement the physical masterplan for Dublin Zoo along biogeographic regions, with a focus on improved indoor habitats that allow for optimal animal welfare

and longer visitor dwell-times. With this, we will put the Zoo on a path to becoming a true all-weather destination.

Animal welfare is our mandate and our primary consideration. New modern animal habitats will be developed such that they allow the animals choice and control at all times, promote a wide range of natural behaviours and facilitate social interactions.

Our visitors will always be at the very heart of Dublin Zoo. We will greatly enhance the visitor experience by giving individual ecoregions a distinct identity, and by adding more interactive and immersive elements wherever possible, from underwater viewing of our aquatic animals to creating more science-inspired play opportunities for children.

GETTING THE VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE READY FOR 1.5M PEOPLE

We want to create a holistic visitor experience, including modern and spacious amenities designed to cater for 1.5m annual visitors. We will review the location of our catering options with the aim of relocating the main park restaurant in the centre of our site, where people are most likely to want to eat. The restaurant will be part of the Dublin Zoo experience and offer easy, child-friendly and healthy lunch options in a wild atmosphere while bringing to life our conservation and sustainability values. We will explore offering click-and-collect menus, lunch and picnic packs, as well as other flexible and customer-driven dining options, promoting where possible local Irish artisan food producers.

Similarly, we will increase the amount of available retail space by expanding the Zoo's main gift shop and exploring additional locations for themed retail opportunities. In a post-Covid world, we will further develop

our online and click-and-collect retail offer. A dedicated visitor services area and function will be located at the Zoo's main entrance.

DIVERSITY OF LIFE

As Ireland's national zoo, our aim is to take visitors on a journey through the world's ecoregions and foster in them an understanding and appreciation of the diversity of life on Earth. We will widen the scope of our animal collection to include taxonomic groups such as fish and invertebrates while proposing the addition of an Australian ecoregion and an area for the conservation of native Irish species.

Our collection planning will consider the extinction risk to a species in the wild, its inclusion in a conservation breeding programme, Dublin Zoo's expertise and facilities to keep the species and, importantly, the ambassadorial and educational role the animals will play in achieving our vision of a world where people live in harmony with nature.

BROADER ENGAGEMENT

At the heart of our purpose is to inspire a passion for nature – one person, one family at a time. We want to inspire a broad and diverse audience to reflect Ireland's population. In order

to achieve this, we will proactively engage with groups from socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds that are currently underrepresented among our visitor base and work with them to make the Zoo accessible to all.

We will grow the proportion of our overseas visitors by creating a brand profile in the UK and in other potential markets. As the majority of overseas visitors to Dublin are adults without children, we will create more adult-focussed packages and build relationships with Tourism Ireland and local hotels to promote the Zoo. A focus on packages for adults will also help us attract more of the domestic over-65 and young adult segments.

EVENTS AND PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

With our popular 'Wild Lights' festival, Dublin Zoo has significantly increased visitation during the off-peak period of November–January. We will enhance our public programming and create footfall drivers for other off-peak months, for example, high-profile branded events such as wildlife photography exhibitions. We will also consider evening and early morning events such as breakfasts with the animals, as well as virtual events that may see more demand post-Covid.

Animal welfare is our mandate and our primary consideration. New modern animal habitats will be developed such that they allow the animals choice and control at all times, promote a wide range of natural behaviours and facilitate social interactions.

We will upgrade buildings like Zoorassic World with better visitor amenities, so that they can be used as stand-alone venues for events out of the Zoo's opening hours.

DIGITAL PLATFORMS

We recognise that the use of technology needs to be aligned with our aim of connecting people with nature yet cannot replace a face-to-face wildlife experience. However, Covid-19 has seen our digital channels become an even more powerful means of engaging our audiences while the Zoo was closed to the public.

We will build on our new virtual programming by creatively developing compelling content for our website, social media channels and Discovery and Learning provision and growing our digital audiences, particularly those overseas and in regions of Ireland that are too far away for a day visit to Dublin Zoo. We will actively explore possibilities to make our digital content accessible to all.



CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP

3. LEADING OUR SECTOR TO ACHIEVE HIGHER IMPACT

As Ireland's national zoo and one of the oldest and most-visited zoos in Europe, we should not only lead by example and inspire our peers, but also proactively advance the ambition of the zoo community with our primary mission of saving wildlife.

Our strategic imperatives are to:

- Drive the zoo community's conservation and education mission
- Influence conservation policy
- Fundraise €10m for capital investment

CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP

In 1950, Dublin Zoo joined the ranks of other like-minded zoos in the International Union of Directors of Zoological Gardens, known today as the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA). Back then, it had just been re-founded after World War II and was developing a conservation agenda for zoos worldwide.

In 1966, we were one of the founding members of the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA). Today, our ambition is to play a leading role in strengthening and growing the conservation impact of the global zoo community. We plan on joining the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and help drive our sector's engagement with IUCN's work, as well as with that of the large multilateral conservation conventions, particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Through conservation status assessment and action planning, we will influence national and international government policy on species conservation issues. And by making the most of being Ireland's most-visited attraction, we will use the combined power of our over 1m-strong visitor force to get behind our influencing.

IMPACTFUL ANIMAL WELFARE

We will work together with our peers and other organisations on developing new approaches to optimising the husbandry and welfare of the animals in our care, and help other sectors adopt what we have learned. At the heart of our welfare agenda is first-class veterinary care; our aim is to develop our recently-built modern vet hospital facilities with state-of-the-art equipment for a cutting-edge veterinary service that further progresses zoo animal and conservation medicine.

CONNECTING AND STANDING OUT

Our location in the heart of Dublin is perfect for making connections. We will use our high profile in the city and country to connect to stakeholders in politics and industry, convene likeminded people and forge strong partnerships to put species conservation at the top of the nation's agenda.

Regular articles and editorial pieces in local and national media will help us communicate our status as a leading conservation and education charity in Ireland. We will establish a series of regular conservation lectures and panel debates. Once a year we will host a gala dinner to award the Zoological Society of Ireland's "Dublin Conservation Prize" to an outstanding figure in the realm of wildlife conservation.

FUNDRAISING TO SUPPORT OUR CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

Fundraising, particularly for capital investment, is an area that Dublin Zoo has not put significant emphasis on in recent years. This changed dramatically at the end of 2020 when the Zoo's precarious cash position, resulting from prolonged closure during two national lockdowns, necessitated a fundraising campaign to survive the approaching winter.

In an overwhelming response, the Irish people donated almost €3m to cover animal care, and the Government contributed another €2.5m to finish certain capital projects that had been stopped due to lack of funding.

Today, our ambition is to play a leading role in strengthening and growing the conservation impact of the global zoo community.

Early in the life of this 10-year vision, we want to engage a fundraising consultancy to help us develop a long-term capital fundraising campaign, with the aim of raising €10m for animal habitats and visitor infrastructure. This will require an initial investment in an in-house resource to allow us to build and nurture relationships with statutory funders, trusts and foundations. We will explore legacy fundraising and grow our corporate partnerships. We will also host regular fundraising events, such as public art trails and subsequent auctions.



A HUB FOR DISCOVERY AND LEARNING

4. CULTIVATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSERVATIONISTS

We aim to be recognised leaders in conservation education, offering innovative and inspirational engagement programmes to inspire a passion for wildlife and the natural world. We want to foster an understanding of how everyone needs to behave as conservationists do to save wildlife.

Our strategic imperatives are to:

- Engage 75,000 learners per year across all our education programmes by the end of this 10-year plan
- Develop third-level education programmes in partnership with universities

CONSERVATION FOR ALL

We will strive to provide a range of socially inclusive learning programmes that cater to all learners and audiences' needs. We will build a funding model to initiate a bursary scheme for underprivileged schools that have financial barriers to access.

ENGAGING MORE LEARNERS

We will engage with more schools locally and nationally to spread Dublin Zoo's mission through face-to-face programmes and virtual activities. Our switch to virtual provision during Covid-19 has opened up new audiences of learners to us, and we will grow these with additional online programmes. We will conduct market research to identify the reasons why certain schools do not engage with Dublin Zoo. To enable growth in learner numbers we will develop a business case and plan our staff resources around this.

THIRD-LEVEL EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

To meet our objective of cultivating the next generation of conservationists, we will offer the full cycle of conservation learning, from primary school to PhD level. We will develop partnerships with QQI Level 5 and 6 institutions to jointly deliver conservation programming. Similarly, we will establish partnerships with universities for the joint delivery of QQI Level 7-9 programmes in conservation science and related fields on a profit-share basis. This may also include co-supervision of MSc and PhD theses.

EXTENDING OUR REACH

Bringing Dublin Zoo to the community helps us reach new audiences. We want to build on our outreach activities delivered to local community partners, which include primary schools, science festivals and conservation organisations. Pre-schools, secondary schools and third-level institutes are among the organisations that we will target. We will also develop a robust virtual outreach programme for formal and informal learning to overcome the geographic barriers of face-to-face education.

Our long-term ambition is to engage audiences in our species' range countries, working directly with the conservation projects that we support, to ensure that mutual learning and capacity-building takes place. This could be a feature of university-based programming.

CREATING MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES

In conjunction with our aim of presenting the different ecoregions in Dublin Zoo with a distinct look and feel, we will design informal interpretation that creatively and effectively engages our visitors and provides solution-based take-home actions that contribute to saving wildlife. We will create an engagement map and

a seasonal public engagement team that acts as a bridge between keeper talks and volunteer events and ensures that we inspire our visitors by our conservation action.

We will work on a clear messaging framework for Dublin Zoo that all staff members and volunteers will draw from. Visitors to Dublin Zoo will experience this message from when they book their tickets to their zoo visit, and afterwards on social media. This will ensure that we are making most of our opportunity to turn our visitors into a joint force for conservation action.

To meet our objective of cultivating the next generation of conservationists, we will offer the full cycle of conservation learning, from primary school to PhD level. We hope to engage 75,000 learners per year across all our education programmes by the end of this 10-year plan.





WE ARE DUBLIN ZOO

5. OPERATING A SUSTAINABLE VISITOR ATTRACTION

We want to become a sustainable business and, over time, reduce our impact on the environment. This is our duty as a national leader in conservation, and it is deeply ingrained in our charitable purpose and values. Avoiding the depletion of natural resources ultimately saves wildlife.

Our strategic imperatives are to:

- **Develop and embed a sustainability strategy for Dublin Zoo**
- **Reduce our environmental impact**

A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Operating a sustainable business requires a lot more than just waste reduction and recycling. In fact, sustainability is so broad a field that an organisation can easily get lost in setting itself unachievable goals and timeframes for managing its use of resources. In the early years of this 10-year vision we will invest in developing a comprehensive and achievable sustainability strategy for Dublin Zoo based on the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Our strategy will feed into the vision for a 'sustainable, resilient Dublin based on economy, environment and equity' as laid out in the Dublin City Development Plan 2016–2022. We will set ourselves realistic targets for reducing our impact in areas of our operations such as waste production and energy use over the lifetime of this plan. This will include making our buildings and animal habitats more energy-efficient and exploring possibilities to generate our own energy from renewable resources.

REDUCING OUR IMPACT TOGETHER

As a much-visited attraction, we lead by example, showcase how we do things differently and hopefully take up to 1.5m people along with us on our journey to meet our sustainability targets. This must not only be through interpretation panels and leaflets. With our partners, we will create interactive play opportunities for children and adults that relate to the sustainable use of energy, such as building dams or using solar power or wind to operate play equipment. Part of our public programming will centre around sustainable living, for example, dedicated family sustainability weekends.

As a much-visited attraction, we lead by example, showcase how we do things differently and hopefully take up to 1.5m people along with us on our journey to meet our sustainability targets.

**We are Dublin Zoo. We save
wildlife and inspire a passion
for nature – one person,
one family at a time.**



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