

Written evidence submitted by Pupils 2 Parliament (AAB0019)

PUPILS 2 PARLIAMENT

“Animals Abroad”

Submission of school pupils’ views from Pupils 2 Parliament

for the

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

Inquiry on the Animals Abroad Bill

Submitted by Dr Roger Morgan OBE for Pupils 2 Parliament

This submission is not confidential, and may be freely quoted (including the quotations from children) in relation to the Inquiry and the Bill.

Pupils 2 Parliament is an independent charity project working with schools to gather and submit pupils’ views and experiences to parliamentary inquiries and government consultations.

September 2021

INTRODUCTION

1. Pupils 2 Parliament gathers school pupils' views for submission to Parliamentary Inquiries and Government consultations. Pupils' views are collected and faithfully reported independently, neutrally and without bias. Children and young people are asked for their views without adult influence on answers. The views gathered are therefore their own spontaneous 'unled' responses.
2. The project aims to provide children and young peoples' perspectives to national decision makers, and, importantly, enables children and young people to participate directly in democracy. Their views frequently provide valuable and often challenging 'fresh thinking' on even complex policy issues.
3. This submission gives the views of 32 children aged 9 to 11 from Knighton Church in Wales Primary School, Powys.
4. Their views were gathered in school by pupils individually completing an online Pupils 2 Parliament survey.
5. The pupils were all given the same online explanations of the issues involved in the consultation. These were independently prepared by Pupils 2 Parliament, and were worded neutrally. The survey questions asked were based on the issues set out in the inquiry's Call for Evidence.

Banning the export and import of hunting trophies

6. Before explaining the issues set out in the Call for Evidence, and without suggesting answers, we asked the children to say whether they would or would not like to have something made of ivory.
7. Half the children said they were not sure, but of the rest, most (11) said they would like to have something made of ivory, compared with 6 who would not.
8. It is important to report to the Committee that the majority of the children said they did not know, before doing this consultation survey, that ivory comes from the tusks or horns of animals. 21 out of 31 answering this question did not know that.
9. Of those who did know the source of ivory, two quotations show the children's strong views: "no (I would not like to have something made of ivory) because it's hurting the animals and it's wrong"; "ivory is evil".

10. 30 children answered the question from the Call for Evidence on whether they thought that banning people from bringing hunting trophies from rare animals into the UK would actually help to save rare animals abroad.
11. 9 said they were not sure. The majority of those who felt able to express an opinion one way or the other thought that such a ban would indeed help to save rare animals abroad. 14 said this, compared with 7 who thought a ban wouldn't actually have that effect.
12. One child wrote that they were in favour of the proposed ban "because they are killing rare animals just for a piece of gold, but we need more rare animals". Another wrote that without such a ban, "people would think it would be ok to kill".
13. One however did not think a ban would have the desired effect; "because the animal is already dead, it has already been harvested, so it won't change anything". They went on however, "if it was alive and rare, yes, ban it".

Animal trophies that pre-date the legislation

14. We asked the children for their view, and reasons for it, on the question of whether or not to ban animal trophies that pre-date the legislation. We focused on trophies that long predate the legislation. We asked them whether or not they thought it is OK to buy or bring hunting trophies into the UK from animals that have already been hunted a long time ago, rather than animals that are being hunted these days.
15. The pupils voted strongly (by 18 votes out of a total of 31) that it is 'NOT OK' to buy or bring trophies into the UK from animals hunted in the past. 8 thought this is ok, and 5 said they were unsure. One reason given for regarding such a ban as ineffective in saving rare animals was that "it still isn't helping them stay alive".
16. These quotations illustrate the majority view in favour of banning import of animal trophies that long predate the legislation: "because people would like those things and then kill the animals to make or get it", "no, because they still killed the animal". One child focused on the question of ivory; "I think we should ban them (trophies that predate legislation) and stop ivory".
17. There are very clear messages here for the Government's moves to a stronger stance against ivory.
18. Only one child gave a reason for voting that it is OK to bring trophies into the UK from animals hunted a long time ago; simply "because it was a long time ago".

Banning advertising and offering overseas activities and experiences involving unacceptable treatment of animals

19. As a basis to consideration of participating in overseas activities and experiences involving animals, and before we introduced the issue of unacceptable treatment of the animals, we asked the children whether, if they were on a holiday abroad where they could have elephant rides, they would want to have an elephant ride.
20. Over half the children (17 out of 32 responding) said yes, they would want to have an elephant ride. Importantly though, 13 out of the 32 children said no, they would not want to have an elephant ride.
21. Many children wrote more about their thinking on this. Some saw an elephant ride as a desirable experience; "I would love an elephant ride", "it would be fun", "it would be amazing", "yes, it would be a good experience".
22. But many wrote of the reasons they would not want to take advantage of the offer to have an elephant ride.
23. Even though they were answering this question before we introduced the concept of unacceptable treatment of the animals, some would not want to ride on an elephant because it might hurt the elephant: "because it would hurt them", "because it could hurt the elephant depending on how old you are", "it will hurt the elephant's back and legs". There was also a concern that giving rides in hot countries might be harmful to the animals; "no, because of the heat". Importantly, these are the spontaneous views of primary aged children.
24. Two quotations summed up the views of many: "it would be fun, but not very fair on the elephants", "it might harm the elephants. As much as elephants are my favourite animal I would never do that to the animal".
25. One child saw a risk to themselves in taking such a ride: "you could fall off and hurt yourself".
26. Another spontaneously raised the issue of welfare for the animal giving the rides; "it depends on if the animal is happy and safe".
27. It is worth noting that the children's views on taking elephant rides remained stable, even after we had raised the question of ill-treatment further on in the survey. Asking them the same question about wanting elephant rides at the end of the survey, the balance of yes and no answers had not shifted. It looks as if children's existing positions on the issue are firmly held.
28. We asked the children whether they thought animals used to give rides would be looked after better or worse in countries abroad than in the UK. There was a strong view that such animals are likely to be looked after better here in the UK than abroad. Exactly half (14 out of 28) the children responding said

that we probably look after those animals better in the UK than they do in other countries abroad. Only 4 thought such animals were probably better looked after abroad than here in the UK. A further 8 thought there was probably little difference between the UK and countries abroad in how well such animals are looked after. (3 said they were not sure).

29. It was striking that the main reason given by children for the view that animals giving rides abroad are less well looked after than in the UK was nothing to do with different approaches to welfare – it was that animals giving rides abroad would probably be living in hotter climates than in the UK, and the heat would cause distress to the animals giving rides. One quotation illustrates this view; “on really hot days they might suffer because if they are giving people rides it might really hurt them poor animals”.
30. Consistently with their overall views, the great majority of the children (25 out of 30 responding) thought that fun activities involving animals abroad, like riding elephants or swimming with dolphins, are OK as long as those animals are being treated well. “If they are treated well, it is OK!”, “as long as they treat them well and are not hot and get all the care they need”.
31. The key issues for the children were whether or not animals used to give rides are being treated well, whether they are being hurt by the process of giving rides, and whether they are distressed by doing that in hot climates.
32. There remained a small number of children who were against animals being used to give rides, on principle and even if the animals are well looked after: “it isn’t fair on the animals”, “they still shouldn’t be riding on elephants and swimming with dolphins”.
33. We asked the children for their views on the idea of a legal ban on anyone in this country advertising or offering activities (like riding on elephants or swimming with dolphins) that involve animals abroad. 10 out of the 17 who expressed a view were in support of a legal ban – sometimes strongly so; “make it against the law because it is animal abuse”.
34. Two children were not sure about a ban. One said it should depend on whether the animals were being hurt. “It is good to experience riding them, but we shouldn’t hurt them”.
35. Others raised other points about animal experiences abroad. Some thought it matters whether animals such as dolphins are trained for the activities on offer. A trained animal might not be able to survive in the wild, and so needs to carry on taking part in the activities it is trained for; “the ones you would swim with are trained so if they go out into the wild they might not know how to survive in the wild”.
36. A few differentiated between the species which might be involved in animal experiences abroad; “I think we should swim with dolphins, but ban

elephant rides". Two children saw riding horses for pleasure as acceptable, but not riding other species; "it should only be horse riding".

Who should be responsible for ensuring activities and experiences overseas do not cause unacceptable treatment of animals

37. We put this question to the children from the Call for Evidence. The most frequent answer was 'not sure'.
38. Seven children did however express a view. Four of these thought professionals concerned with animals should have this responsibility – an "animal expert" or someone involved in "animal care" or in helping animals.
39. Another proposal was that if animals are performing abroad in a circus, then it is that circus that should be responsible for making sure the animals are not badly treated.
40. The other two proposals were that the responsibility should be on the government or "people in charge" of the relevant country.

My thanks

41. I am grateful to the Head and staff of Knighton Church in Wales Primary School for enabling their pupils to give their views, and above all to the children and students themselves for their thinking and answers to our online questions.

Roger Morgan
Pupils 2 Parliament

18th September 2021