5 June 2017

Dear Convener,

During the Officials evidence session on the Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (Scotland) Bill of 23 May, I agreed to update the Committee on when the responses to the Scottish Government consultation of 2014 would be published.

I am writing to advise you that we have not yet been able to publish these online due to a number of technical difficulties. The original consultation was hosted on a legacy system and as a result all of the responses had to been printed out and redacted by hand as hard copy, and then rescanned electronically. Certain stakeholders had advised us of previous threats and incidences of intimidation within the sector and as a result we needed to be absolutely sure that the redaction process was correct. This also involved redacting the scanned responses electronically so that there was no chance that personal details could be viewed.

We continue to work with our IT teams to ensure that we can publish the responses online as quickly as possible, hopefully within a matter of days. We are also exploring other options to provide the consultation responses to both the committee and wider stakeholders, should there be any longer term delay in hosting the responses online. We will of course provide feedback on our experience of this process to the wider Scottish Government to try to avoid this sort of unfortunate delay in future. The system now in use for publishing consultation responses is however much more efficient.

I thank you for the committee’s patience and understanding in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Voas
Scottish Government Veterinary Adviser