

## BIAZA EDUCATION POLICY



### *Introduction*

The British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) is a conservation, education and scientific wildlife charity.

In addition to complying with current UK and Irish legislation, including the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 (amended 2002) and the Secretary of State's Standards of Modern Zoo Practice (SSSMZP<sup>1</sup>), BIAZA collections must undertake education work as part of the Memorandum, Articles of Association and Requirements of Membership of the Association.

Zoo education has evolved to encompass a huge scope of topics and audiences. Living collections are now used not only to convey the core values of conservation education, but also to engage with curriculum areas such as vocational studies, pure sciences, the arts, literacy, numeracy and citizenship.

A key focus of the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy (WZACS, 2005<sup>2</sup>) is education and training. It recommends the formulation of an education policy at a national level and states that it "*should provide a coordinated approach to education, both formal and informal, and provide leadership in the formulation of principles, strategies, and minimum education standards.*"

Within this Policy the term "education" is used to mean education and learning in the broadest sense, not confined to schools or education focused on children, but to encompass learning opportunities, experiences and activities for all ages. (Some guidance on this is given in the Zoos Forum Handbook chapter on conservation, education and research).

### *BIAZA's vision:*

To be a powerful force in the care and conservation of the natural world

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/zoos/index.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Building a Future for Wildlife: the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy. Published by the World Association for Zoos and Aquariums 2005.

The education element is integral to two of the four strands of its Mission, namely to support its members:

- to inspire people to conserve the natural world, and
- to deliver the highest quality environmental education, training and research

*BIAZA believes that:*

Zoos and aquariums are uniquely placed to inspire and educate people to understand the interdependence of all living things, and to make changes in people's behaviour which will have a positive impact on wildlife.

*BIAZA Education Mission Statement*

*BIAZA collections aim to provide unique lifelong learning opportunities, to raise awareness, to increase respect and knowledge about wildlife and global issues, and thus to engage and connect people of all ages with the natural world.*

*Principles of the BIAZA Education Policy*

The Policy itself:

- It is an essential tool that outlines the content and scope of education within BIAZA collections.
- It sets out the vision and mission for education and learning within BIAZA collections, and shows how this fits in with European (EAZA) and global (WAZA/IZE) strategies.
- It promotes best practice and encompasses the diversity of all BIAZA member collections.
- It is intended for use by current and potential BIAZA members, educators within zoos and aquariums, along with external professionals, members of the public and other stakeholder groups.
- It is a living document and will be reviewed from time to time to meet the changing needs and philosophy of zoo education.

Policy Actions fall under the following headings:

- Integrate formal and informal education activities within all BIAZA collections.

- Engage visitors with unique, lifelong and cultural experiences using species in living collections and in the natural world.
- Apply policy principles to a wide spectrum of audiences.
- Become ambassadors for environmental education and provide a platform for personal inspiration from which zoos can contribute to conservation.
- Evoke positive action towards global issues, citizenship and sustainability.
- Evaluate the quality of education provision in individual collections and for BIAZA as a whole.
- Engage with the wider zoo and aquarium community in advancing the educational role of zoos.
- Engage with other sectors of society, including politicians locally and nationally and other conservation and education organizations, to promote education and learning in zoos for diverse audiences.

All BIAZA members **should** fulfil all of the following points commensurate with the size of their collection

Policy Action	BIAZA members SHOULD:
Integrate formal and informal education activities within all BIAZA collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities to learn within and outside the collection and online</li> <li>• State the education role clearly in the collection's mission statement</li> <li>• Complement the current National Curriculum Framework</li> <li>• Be familiar with the Zoos Forum Handbook chapter on conservation, education and research</li> <li>• Employ suitably trained education staff to deliver this provision. In smaller collections a nominated person must be responsible for the education/learning</li> <li>• Produce an education policy that is regularly reviewed, and ensure that at least one person in the collection is responsible for its implementation</li> <li>• Demonstrate that the education policy has been implemented by reference to specific projects, figures of attendance and research</li> <li>• Integrate learning into all areas of collections, including exhibit design and collection planning where possible</li> <li>• Develop partnerships with formal education institutions</li> <li>• Adapt learning opportunities to suit all abilities and special needs</li> <li>• Ensure that signage clearly and correctly identifies all animals, with specific breeding programmes highlighted.</li> <li>• Ensure that all education and learning is based on scientific facts. Where cultural, religious or alternative ideas are represented they must be clearly indicated as such</li> </ul>

Policy Action	BIAZA members SHOULD:
Engage visitors with unique, lifelong and cultural experiences using species in living collections and in the natural world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer a wide range of education services and opportunities within the collection which is appropriate for its size and diversity of audiences</li> <li>• Use a range of media to convey educational and conservation messages</li> <li>• Deliver multisensory experiences that cater for a variety of learning styles</li> <li>• Present appropriate experiences with live animals and plants (see BIAZA close contact guidelines)</li> <li>• Integrate education and conservation messages into animal demonstrations if they form part of the programme</li> <li>• Integrate learning, emotional and behavioural objectives within all educational experiences</li> <li>• Deliver learning opportunities for all ages of staff, volunteers and visitors to continually improve their knowledge and skills towards environmental awareness and action ( life-long learning)</li> <li>• Provide learning over a range of settings and activities (life-wide learning)</li> <li>• Influence learning to guide visitors' attitudes and beliefs towards a more positive value of nature (life-deep learning)</li> </ul>
Apply policy principles to a wide spectrum of audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target a variety of audiences through a wide range of educational experiences</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for learners from all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds</li> <li>• Employ appropriate language in interpretation panels and signage that can be accessed by all levels of learners</li> <li>• Develop inclusive practice to encourage learners from different social and economic backgrounds.</li> <li>• Support education initiatives in collections and regions which require additional resources</li> </ul>

Policy Action	BIAZA members SHOULD:
Become ambassadors for environmental education and provide a platform for personal inspiration from which zoos can contribute to conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop outreach programmes to the local community (and beyond if resources permit) and make links with <i>in situ</i> projects.</li> <li>• Communicate effectively within BIAZA and other relevant organizations</li> <li>• Participate in local, national and international conservation campaigns</li> <li>• Gain accreditation of excellence, e.g. Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge</li> <li>• Share good practice through a variety of media and award schemes to increase BIAZA's profile</li> </ul>
Evoke positive action towards global issues, citizenship and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve communities in local action that can connect with their own lives and prior experiences</li> <li>• Highlight the impact of climate change upon species within the collection and upon the local environment</li> <li>• Highlight biodiversity loss, through a range of activities and learning opportunities</li> <li>• Demonstrate how individual collections are improving their environmental profile</li> <li>• Give clear instructions on how visitors can take positive actions on both a small and a large scale</li> <li>• Illustrate how individuals' actions can contribute to positive changes to the natural world globally</li> <li>• Include elements of global issues and sustainability in all types of education and learning activities</li> <li>• Make global environmental issues relevant to visitors</li> </ul>

Policy Action	BIAZA members SHOULD:
Evaluate the quality of education provision in individual collections and for BIAZA as a whole	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in local, regional and national education and training networks such as conferences, e-groups and courses</li> <li>• Provide training opportunities for education staff to improve assessment and evaluation</li> <li>• Train staff and volunteers as an integral role in the delivery of education and learning, through formal courses and qualifications and/or informal (on the job) methods</li> <li>• Support ANCMZA (Advanced National Certificate in the Management of Zoo Animals) training for keepers</li> <li>• Support visitor studies research through links with universities, education research groups and collaboration with other BIAZA collections</li> <li>• Develop learner evaluations through a variety of methods and theoretical frameworks</li> <li>• Produce annual reports to confirm involvement in education projects, evaluation and research</li> <li>• Facilitate widening opportunities for education research</li> <li>• Share evaluation reports with BIAZA collections and the wider community</li> </ul>
Engage with the wider zoo and aquarium community in advancing the educational roles of zoos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in EAZA and IZE networks such as conferences and e-groups</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for exchange of information and ideas between zoos in different regions</li> <li>• Publish reports upon work undertaken to share with other practitioners</li> <li>• Utilise the implementation of WZACS in other collections as a learning resource.</li> </ul>

Policy Action	BIAZA members SHOULD:
Engage with other sectors of society, including politicians locally and nationally and other conservation and education organisations, to promote education and learning in zoos for diverse audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make contact with local politicians and wildlife conservation groups</li> <li>• Share experiences and activities with others in the wider field who have common areas of interest ( such as biodiversity awareness of species conservation campaigns)</li> <li>• Utilise a variety of media to highlight the work undertaken by zoos in conservation education, through the provision of learning experiences</li> <li>• Encourage partnerships and benchmarking with other national and local education providers such as botanic gardens, conservation organizations, museums and galleries in UK and overseas</li> </ul>