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PRESS RELEASE

RETURN OF THE TIGER?

The Isle of Wight Zoo asks you – should they bring back the tiger on the fort?

For many years Sandown had an unusual landmark in a model tiger on top of Sandown Fort. Owned by the Isle of Wight Zoo, it was designed to promote the zoo's specialism in the care of tigers, and soon became famous amongst locals and visitors alike. However, as the elements attacked it and tastes changed, the tiger began to look a little shabby. In 2008, after one last blaze of glory which saw it painted pink in aid of breast cancer awareness, the tiger was removed and the zoo expected to hear no more about it.

It turned out that the tiger was more popular than anticipated, however. Since its removal staff have received a steady stream of enquiries as to its whereabouts and whether it will be returning. Eventually they decided that as this is the Chinese Year of the Tiger, this would be a good time to make a decision on its future. Now the public have the chance to decide whether they'd like to see the tiger returned to its proud position surveying Sandown.

Members of the public are invited to share their opinions, either by voting at the zoo or visiting the website at isleofwightzoo.com. People who choose to visit the zoo will have the chance to see the tiger on the lawn and cast their vote there. Additionally, those who visit on Sundays (and Saturdays during the holidays) will be able to participate for free in the Year of the Tiger carnival workshop, run by local artist Hannah George. This will run throughout the summer with tiger-themed craft activities and competitions.

All that remains is to decide whether the Year of the Tiger is the year that sees the tiger returned to its rightful place. The final result will be announced on the 19th April.

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Pictures are available on request.

Notes to editors:

Isle of Wight Zoo aims to promote the survival of endangered species through first class educational and recreational experiences, exemplary animal management, conservation and research. The Zoo is best known for its work with exotic cats. As a centre for surplus or rescued big cats, all have come to the Zoo at different stages of their lives and from a variety of backgrounds. The Zoo strives to encourage the social development and natural behaviour of each cat in their care. Every species of big cat residing at the Zoo is currently under considerable threat in its natural habitat. Isle of Wight Zoo is currently home to 11 tigers, 4 lions and 2 jaguars

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