



ORNAMENTAL AQUATIC TRADE ASSOCIATION LTD

"The voice of the ornamental fish industry"

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Dear Prime Minister

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Businesses in the home aquarium industry are facing an unprecedented threat due to the cost-of-living crisis.

Pet fish are the most populous pet in the UK – we estimate 14% of the population (4 million households) have around 100 million fish in their homes and gardens, more than another other kind of pet species. These businesses look after hundreds of thousands of animals at any one time that they cannot turn their backs on. Three quarters of the UK's licensed pet shops sell fish, which have the highest energy needs because of the necessity to keep aquariums maintained to an even temperature at all times.

The home aquarium sector is facing hugely damaging impacts from the energy crisis with many local, small businesses already considering closing down. Businesses in this sector are experiencing crippling energy bills to run the necessary heaters, filters, lighting and other systems required to keep fish alive, healthy and ensure their welfare needs are met. In some cases, bills are increasing by 300-400% which is just unsustainable and, if it continues, will see the closure of many well-known, local high street aquatics stores with huge ramifications for the animals they sell. We have heard of one example where the energy bill has gone from just under £4,000 per month to a staggering £15,000 a month. All businesses in the supply chain will be impacted and we are aware of one major wholesaler which is likely to experience an increase of over £1 million a year in gas and electricity costs. No businesses can withstand these levels of increases.

These pressures are further exacerbated by the impacts on people's disposable incomes and their ability to pay for the energy needed to support their fish tanks. This means many people are now giving them up and being forced to rehome their family pets – often back to the pet shop they bought them from. This is putting an increased burden on aquatic shops that have limited space to accommodate rehomed animals. One shop has told us that in one week 10 of their customers closed down their tanks.

This comes at a very bad time following the struggles many businesses faced through the pandemic and their hopes for a period of market stabilisation. We know how important our pets were during the pandemic, including tropical fish, when people got great pleasure and peace of mind from them at a time when it was most needed.

The inability to afford the energy needed to properly care for tropical fish means that many businesses will face a critical dilemma about what to do with the livestock they hold, raising a very serious risk of mass euthanasia. This issue is becoming extremely serious and the aquatics industry will be hardest hit of all in the pet sector.

We request that the Government takes urgent and meaningful action soon. Without it there is no doubt we will witness many aquarium businesses closing their doors for good, leaving employees without work during a time of crisis, and millions of pet fish at risk of euthanasia or release into the wild because there is not the ability to rehome them like other pets.

Yours sincerely

Dominic Whitmee
Chief Executive