

**BEAST FROM THE EAST – SNOW LEOPARD PLAY IN UK SNOW**

With the onslaught of snow across the UK, at least 2 of its residents are enjoying themselves. The endangered snow leopards at the Welsh Mountain Zoo, Colwyn Bay, are enjoying playing in the snow this week.

Captured roaming around their enclosure, they can be seen to be rolling, playing and enjoying the cold snap across the UK.

Snow leopards are on the highly endangred list with less than 5,000 to be known to exist across the world.

The Welsh Mountain Zoo has launched its first ever crowdfunding campaign to help raise funds for its ambitious and unique project, creating a new purpose built enclosure for the snow leopards.

The first project of its kind to be launched in the UK, Silk Road involves a complete redesign of the Zoo’s snow leopard enclosure, to become a representation of the mountainous regions in which the endangered species lives. The Silk Road will forge links with China and the Himalayan mountains exploring the Chinese culture, language, environment and species that originate from there.

Nick Jackson, Director at the Welsh Mountain Zoo commented: “This is a really different project that deviates away from what is traditionally considered a typical zoo project. We felt that in keeping with this approach we would look at an alternative route to funding as part of the wider project mix. The crowdfunder allows friends of the zoo, animal lovers and those with a cultural interest in both Wales and China to really get involved in Silk Road and play an important role in its very existence.”

With funding already secured through a private donor and the Zoo charity’s own resources, additional funding of £200,000 is needed by the charity to complete the £1million scheme which the Zoo aims to open early next year. The project is rapidly gaining support from businesses, locals and even a few celebrities including Dame Judi Dench.

The snow leopard enclosure will be designed to offer visitors a nose to nose visual experience through glass, whilst an elevated walkway will journey around the site, offering panoramic views across the Zoo and to the Carneddau Mountains.

Nick continued: “The campaign launches on Monday 12th February and will run for a full month. We welcome contributions of any size and have some wonderful rewards available, several of which simply can’t be bought. These include…

The Zoo’s very own breeding pair of snow leopards, Szecsuan and Otilia, have made a huge impact on the Welsh Mountain Zoo in the 11 years that they have lived there and the global conservation programme that the Zoo is involved in has gathered real momentum with partnerships and relationships forged with other zoo’s around the world.

Nick added: “With our wonderful pair of breeding snow leopards, we have through the years becoming increasingly involved in conservation campaigns and projects to raise awareness of their endangered status, now having made an annual commitment to support the Snow Leopard Trust. Silk Road will help highlight their position in the wild, whilst creating an exciting and innovative enclosure that will form an important part of the Zoo’s future”

“We’re incredibly excited to get the crowdfunder underway and encourage anyone with an interest to please get involved and donate.”

In association with Bangor University and the Confucius Institute, the project will explore and educate visitors on the culture of China. Following on from this an interactive mobile device app will also connect zoo visitors to the project by taking them on a journey down the Silk Road - encountering plants, animals, people, stories, and culture as they explore the connections between the flora and fauna of North Wales and China. Incorporating mixed reality, real-time updates, and gameplay, the app will invite zoo visitors of all ages to step into another world: that of the Silk Road.

To donate to the crowdfunder campaign please visit www.crowdfunder.co.uk/the-silk-road

**Ends**

**Notes to editor**

**Please see attached photographs of the snow leopard and**

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**The Welsh Mountain Zoo:**

Opened in 1963, the Welsh Mountain Zoo was recognised in 2008 as the National Zoo of Wales. In the trusteeship of the National Zoological Society of Wales it is making an increasingly important contribution to the conservation work of zoos nationally and world-wide.

**The Vision:** A world where animals and their habitats are appreciated, understood and conserved.

[**www.welshmountainzoo.org**](http://www.welshmountainzoo.org)

**Snow Leopard Trust:**The largest and oldest organization working solely to protect the endangered [snow leopard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snow_leopard) (*Panthera uncia*) and its habitat in 12 countries of Central Asia. The trust is a non-profit organization with its headquarters in [Seattle, Washington](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seattle%2C_Washington). The present total population of snow leopards in the wild is estimated at between 3,920 and 6,390.

The trust performs scientific research projects, manages community-level conservation programs, and fosters global collaboration amongst snow leopard experts and other snow leopard support groups.

The organization raises money through donations, grants, fundraising events and sales of products on its website shop, and is supported by zoos and other conservation organizations. The Snow Leopard Trust is recognized as a 4-star charity by Charity Navigator,  and is a member of the [Association of Zoos and Aquariums](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Association_of_Zoos_and_Aquariums) (AZA), European Association of Zoos and Aquariums (EAZA), [World Association of Zoos and Aquariums](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Association_of_Zoos_and_Aquariums) (WAZA), [International Species Information System](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Species_Information_System) (ISIS) and Co-Op America.

Currently, the Snow Leopard Trust focuses its efforts in five snow leopard range countries: [China](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China), [India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India), [Mongolia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mongolia), [Pakistan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pakistan), and [Kyrgyzstan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyrgyzstan). In these countries, the trust employs and trains staff to carry out research, education, and conservation. In the seven other countries within the snow leopard range, the trust supports and collaborates with researchers and conservation organizations.

**www.snowleopard.org**

**The Confucius Institute:**
an international partnership between the University of Bangor , the [China University of Political Science and Law (CUPL)](http://web.cupl.edu.cn/en/) in Beijing, and [Hanban](http://english.hanban.org/), the Chinese agency for the promotion of Chinese language and culture.
**www.bangor.ac.uk/confucius-institute/**