



A visitor greets one of the horses at Hopefield Animal Sanctuary  
PHOTOS: RICCI FOTHERGILL

# 'Relief' as animal sanctuary opens gates at long last

By **HANNAH BROWN**

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AS high streets welcomed people back to shops, pubs and restaurants on Monday, zoos and animal sanctuaries were also able to re-open their doors.

All shops, hairdressers, beauty salons and other close-contact services, such as restaurants, pubs, gyms, spas, theme parks, libraries and community centres were able to re-open from April 12, as the country moved into the second stage of lockdown easing.

Hopefield Animal Sanctuary, in

Brentwood, welcomed people back after having to shut its doors to the public in November last year.

Being closed for those months meant the sanctuary missed out on vital donations and visits over the festive season.

Speaking on behalf of Hopefield, CEO Dave Schlaich said: "It's such a relief that we're finally able to have visitors on site again.

"Unfortunately the Government didn't provide any support to animal charities, so things have been really tough for us.

"We were lucky that we could apply for some funding as we fall

under the hospitality and leisure sector. We're all really hoping that our gates will stay open this time."

As hospitality venues can only serve food and drink to people outside, the sanctuary has built a new marquee for Max's Cafe, allowing it to serve food and drink to visitors.

Hopefield was very successful in implementing coronavirus safety measures when it was allowed to be open last year.

After many positive reviews, it is keeping the same rules in place.

They are:

■ Guests must pre-book a time slot. Walk-ins will not be permitted. Pre-

All visitors to Hopefield are temperature checked upon arrival



Visitors enjoy seeing some of the animals at Hopefield



booked tickets mean Hopefield can monitor the number of visitors at any one time.

■ Cash payments will be accepted in the Gift Shop and Tea Room, but card is preferred.

■ All visitors will be temperature checked upon arrival. If you have a temperature you won't be allowed to enter, but your visit can be rearranged.

■ Visitors don't have to wear a face covering whilst walking around the sanctuary, but they are required when visiting the Gift Shop and Tea Room.

■ A one-way route has been created

around the sanctuary and must be followed.

■ Tickets can be booked through its website.

People also returned to the High Street in Brentwood, Billericay and Wickford on Monday to get a haircut and visit the shops, after many had been closed for about four months.

The next easing of restrictions, according to the Government road-map, is due to take place not before May 17. From this date it is expected that different households may be able to meet indoors, and pubs and restaurants will possibly be able to serve customers inside again.

## Firm targets customer safety with invention

AS pubs and restaurants begin to re-open their doors to the public, social distancing is still a top priority.

One business from Brentwood is trialling a new system that it hopes will help businesses keep their customers safe.

Brentwood Communications has created Table Tap, a new system that allows customers to communicate with staff, without having to leave their table.

The system works through buttons being placed on a table. When a customer wants to get the attention of a waiter, they press the button, and this alerts staff through a watch they are wearing.

Table Tap is currently being



James Miller and Sharif Uddin

trialled in Dusk restaurant in Brentwood, Beauvoir Arms, in Billericay, and The Horseshoes Country Pub in Upshire.

James Miller, the managing director at Brentwood Communications, said the "simple solution" came about

after the company installed a similar system in the fitting rooms of the Nike store in Paris, allowing people to alert staff if they wanted to swap items.

Mr Miller said: "The main idea came about pre-Covid, but when Covid came along we

thought this would be a great solution to keep customers in their seats.

"If anybody dropped a fork, wanted ketchup, or the bill, they can quickly get hold of waiting staff, and they don't have to get up from their seats.

"So far we've had a brilliant reaction. We've been dealing with enquiries every day.

"It's easy to use and set up. It's something that will keep customers in their seats and make them feel safer."

Sharif Uddin, co-owner of Dusk in Brentwood, Essex, said Table Tap will help them reassure customers that the restaurant is safe.

"We're really happy to be trialling this technology," he said.

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