



The Howletts Elephants in their outside area with steel perimeter fencing

Howletts Wild Animal Park



Key Challenge:

To double the size of the bull elephant's existing sleeping quarters, adding automated sliding gate and safety access corridor. Also to extend the perimeter security fencing on the outside corral to prevent contact between elephants and visitors.

Jacksons Fencing products featured:

Custom built steel safety cage, automated customised sliding gate and heavy-duty welded steelwork.

It is recommended that large bull elephants, like Jums at Howletts wild animal park, need an area of at least 50 square meters for a bedroom or stall, so when staff at the Kent wild animal park realised that the bull elephant had outgrown his stall and there wasn't enough space for him to lie down properly, they decided it was time for action.

To make this happen Ron Kent, Maintenance Project Manager at Howletts contacted Jacksons Fencing. Strictly speaking this isn't a "fencing" job, but the key skills involved were similar, building metal structures, welding and working to targets. Jacksons pride themselves in a flexible approach to fulfilling customers' requirements, so being aware of this Ron got in touch with Jacksons, who he enjoys a good working relationship with, as they have fulfilled many fencing projects for the animal park over the years.

The idea was to make two existing stalls into a single large one, so the bull elephant would have more than enough room to lie down and get a good night's sleep. The wall between two old stalls was demolished to create one large room. Then it was Jacksons job to build a structure within the building. This could be described as a safety cage – a hefty steel framework was

installed and 75 x 12mm flat bar was welded onto the framework. The bars were spaced at critical intervals of no more than 70mm apart, this is to stop Jums fitting his trunk through the gaps and undoing nuts and bolts, apparently elephants will fiddle with things and he could easily interfere with the operating equipment on his new quarter's door, and maybe undo vital fastenings.

The doorway is 3m high with an opening of 2290m. An automatic sliding gate capable of withstanding 8–10 tons of force has been installed to keep Jums safe if he decides he wants to go for a stroll, when he's supposed to be tucked up in bed.

Another part of the plan is to have an access corridor at the rear of the stall, this walkway runs the full length of the stall and is accessed by doors in the back wall and has a gate in the steel bar wall, so keepers can get in and out safely.

Nine extra skylights were added to the roof of the new room, benefitting the occupant by increasing natural light, but it is an important safety aid to the elephant keepers, who naturally take safety seriously considering their charges can weigh six tons!

Along with the work on the bull elephant's quarters Jacksons were tasked with extending the height of the steel barricade in the corral in front of the elephants' houses. The barricade looks like heavy-duty steel beams bolted and welded together to create a super strength safety barrier in front of the fence separating the visitors from the elephants. Apparently Jums is so tall now he has been able to rest his front feet on the lowest rail of the barrier and reach right over the space and over the fence; so another section has been added to avoid this happening.

All the works on these projects were completed on target and Neil Spooner, Animal Director at Howletts had this to say, "The Jacksons welders that have been carrying out this work on site have been amazing, They have been so enthusiastic in their approach to the work; they set daily targets on jobs to be completed, and took a real pride in ensuring they hit them. Nothing stopped them, not even bad weather. I've come past late into the evening and found them still working, determined to not let the schedule slip. They are a credit to Jacksons."



Automatic sliding gate to the new sleeping quarters



Inside view of the new elephant quarters showing safety corridor along one side of the stall, for keepers access



Jums, a happy elephant in his new accommodation