

## Work to begin on new animal shelter

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**By Peter Townson**

Qatar Animal Welfare Society (QAWS) is looking forward to rising like a Phoenix from the ashes when they begin building work on their new state-of-the-art animal shelter soon.

The group, which lost their shelter in a fire last September, has been offered assistance by UAE-based architects Hamilton, who have designed the new shelter on a pro bono basis.

Yesterday, Hamilton officials met QAWS representatives to discuss the future of the shelter and the concept behind the plans for the new facility.

Although the project’s cost is unknown yet, it has been estimated at around QR10mn.

The complete area of the project will be around 10,000 sq m overall, with around 2,000 sq m making up the built-up areas, explained Hamilton’s architectural manager, Yahya al-Tahan, who described ‘Project Phoenix’ as a pleasure to work on.

“It is nice to do something different and my team and I have really enjoyed working on this,” he said, adding “this is a chance to give something back to the community.”

“At Hamilton we feel that everything is not always about fees and profits - we have the chance to contribute to the community here,” he added.

Al-Tahan explained that love for animals was the main reason behind the company deciding to assist with the new plans for the shelter, explaining that his team had closely studied animal shelters in the UK and considered all the regulations necessary for such facilities.

“This has been designed to the highest international standards,” he said, adding “there is nothing else like this in the region.”

Al-Tahan explained that the concept behind the designs was that the shelter has to be a simple, minimalistic space where people can easily interact with the animals, and so he began by looking at Japanese architecture as an inspiration.

And the plans he has produced have certainly proved to be a hit with QAWS officials who described the prospective shelter as beyond their wildest dreams, saying “we just want it to be finished tomorrow!”

However, they are aware of the magnitude of the task ahead of them, and are looking forward to working with the entire community in Qatar to assist with building something for the future.

“This is another chance for Qatar to be a real leader in the region,” said QAWS chairwoman Janet Berry, “they can be the first country to offer this level of support to animal welfare.”

The group will be hoping for organisations to offer their assistance in kind with the build, but they are also pushing to gain charity status – something they have needed for years, but are yet to achieve.

“When people see these plans they will realise just how serious this is,” said Berry, adding “this is not a hobby, this will offer something the country needs, both now and in the future.”

Besides the numerous and extensive new facilities the shelter will offer to QAWS and its many resident animals, ‘Project Phoenix,’ also contains a number of rooms and areas which can be used specifically for education – something QAWS have always felt passionately about.

With many schoolchildren and young adults becoming regular visitors at the farm over recent years, the new shelter will offer far more sophisticated resources for educating new visitors about animal welfare whilst providing them the opportunity to interact with the rescued animals.

Senior project manager, Sean Cormack, who has taken on the role of project manager for the new shelter, explained that his involvement stemmed from his passion for QAWS and the animals they look after.



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