

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party
for the South East of England

Minister Steingrimur J Sigfusson
Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture
Skulagata 4,
150 Reykjavík,
Iceland.

April 14th 2009

Dear Minister,

First let me begin by congratulating you on your appointment as Minister for Fisheries and Agriculture. As a fellow Green I was encouraged to learn about the coalition forged between the Social Democratic Alliance and the Left-Green Movement in Iceland. It is, therefore, especially saddening that our first contact concerns Iceland's position on whaling.

I, along with Greens in the European Parliament, support a ban on the international commercial trade in whale products. I am also seeking to end 'scientific whaling' and I support the designation of substantial regions of oceans and seas as sanctuaries in which all whaling is indefinitely prohibited.

MEPs from across the political spectrum are arguing for the elimination of whale killing - almost one in four cetacean (whale, dolphin and porpoise) species are currently regarded as under threat, with nine species listed as either endangered or critically endangered. The European Parliament is calling on the Council, the Commission and those Member States participating in the working group of the IWC to work toward the achievement of a *universal agreement* on whaling. The tragic history of commercial whaling, combined with the numerous threats currently faced by whale populations, means that the EU must promote the highest level of protection for whales at a global level.

Although Iceland is not a member of the EU, Greens and others in the European Parliament had hoped that your new government would be supportive of efforts to ban commercial trading in whale products, particularly as Iceland is seeking closer ties with Europe. Yet, I understand that, as the Minister of Fisheries, you have agreed to allow the commercial whaling of 150 fin whales and 100 minke whales between 2009 and 2013. Apart from the unacceptable cruelty involved in whaling, surely there is an argument that during the current economic crisis Iceland should be doing all it can to protect the whales it depends on for tourism? For example, Icelandic whale watching association, Icewhale, are worried that killing whales could have a negative effect on their businesses.

I urge you on behalf of the Green Party here in England and Wales and in my capacity as an MEP to reconsider your support for whaling, which has the potential to damage both international respect for the Green movement in Iceland and the global campaign to protect cetaceans.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.