



CAROLINE LUCAS  
GROUP OF THE GREENS/EFA  
MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMMITTEE  
MEMBER OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (SUBSTITUTION)

Mr. Ben Bradshaw, MP  
Minister for Nature Conservation and Fisheries  
DEFRA  
17 Nobel House  
Smith Square  
London SW1P3JR

6<sup>th</sup> June, 2005

Dear Minister

**RE: WHALE WELFARE AND THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION**

I am writing to express my concern, as a member of the European Parliament's Intergroup on Animal Welfare and Conservation, about the current situation at the International Whaling Commission (IWC). I would appreciate your assurance that [country's] IWC commissioner, guided by your policy, will demonstrate a commitment to protecting the welfare of whales at the forthcoming IWC meeting in Seoul, Korea this June.

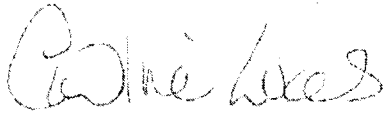
*The difficulties inherent in killing a large, partly submerged animal at sea give rise to severe welfare concerns. For example, recent data shows that whales take over 2 minutes to die after being struck by the whaler's explosive harpoon, with some remaining alive for more than an hour. Yet, within the IWC, the welfare issues remain largely unresolved. I am particularly concerned at the prospect of some nations wanting to see the near 20-year old international moratorium lifted and full scale commercial whaling resumed.*

I understand that this year's IWC meeting comes at a critical time, with ongoing discussions taking place on a Revised Management Scheme (RMS) that could lead to the resumption of commercial whaling, and the revival in the international market for whale meat and products. During these negotiations, it has been suggested that welfare concerns could be addressed simply through a data collection protocol. I believe that it is important to recognise that the collection of data (e.g. on killing methods, times to death, etc.), will not improve or protect the welfare of whales. Instead, it can only measure the extent of the welfare problem.

As the enclosed briefing demonstrates, there is no humane way to kill a whale at sea, and that the best way to protect whale welfare is to halt all commercial and scientific whaling all together. I therefore urge you to ensure that our country's delegation to this year's IWC meeting gives strong support to the protection of whale welfare. I also strongly encourage our delegation to oppose any motions that might lead to the lifting of the moratorium and a resumption of commercial whaling.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Lucas', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Caroline Lucas  
Green Party MEP for South East England



World Society for the Protection of Animals

## BRIEFING ON WHALING AND WELFARE

### Background

Two million great whales were killed in the last century, with some species hunted to the brink of extinction. The killing methods caused widespread and prolonged suffering, whilst concern that some species could become extinct led to a worldwide ban on commercial whaling in 1986. Despite this moratorium, some 1,400 whales are still killed annually using methods little changed in a hundred years.

### Whaling today

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) is the intergovernmental body charged with regulating whaling. The international moratorium on commercial whaling, agreed by the IWC, came into force in 1986. However, loopholes mean that some whales continue to be hunted. Whalers from Norway and Japan, for example, will kill over 1,400 whales this year in commercial and so-called 'scientific' whaling operations. In 2003, Iceland resumed whaling, killing over 30 minke whales for alleged 'research'. The meat from whaling operations, whether commercial or 'scientific', is ultimately intended for human consumption. Yet the killing methods fall well short of the standards necessary to achieve humane slaughter in livestock animals.

### Whaling and welfare

In 1946, Dr Harry Lillie, a ship's physician aboard an Antarctic whaling ship, likened the killing of a whale to, *"a horse having two or three explosive spears stuck into its stomach and being made to pull a butcher's truck through the streets of London while it pours blood in the gutter..."* He said that, *"The gunners themselves admit that if whales could scream the industry would stop, for nobody would be able to stand it."*

The technology used for killing whales has altered little since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the grenade tipped harpoon was invented. Fired from a cannon, the harpoon is intended to penetrate the whale's body to a depth of 30 cm (12 inches) before detonating, killing it by inflicting massive shock or injury. The animal can then be winched to the whaling boat by a line held fast by the harpoon's spring-loaded claws that open on impact. Although the type of explosive used has changed from black powder to the more powerful penthrite, for over 100 years the basic killing method has remained the same.

### Killing methods

Despite its destructive power, the whaler's harpoon often fails to kill its victim instantaneously. Recent data shows that, for commercial and scientific hunts, the average estimated time to death is 2 to 3 minutes, with some whales taking over an hour to die. The combination of variable factors such as visibility at sea, sea state, ship's motion, and marksmanship have a significant impact on the ability to reliably kill a whale instantaneously, regardless of killing device.

### Pursuit

Whalers depend on getting close to their quarry for successful harpooning. However, whales have not evolved as a prey species and are therefore not adapted to being chased. Pursuit times of 30 minutes or more are not unusual in Japanese hunts, for example. The pursuit itself often causes physical and psychological stress, which may lead to fatal syndromes such as Exertional Myopathy, a condition that scientists believe may prove fatal, even to animals that evade capture.



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### **Welfare summary**

A stressful pursuit, prolonged times to death, and some animals being struck and lost, add up to a major welfare problem for whales, of which we may not yet know the full extent. The physiological adaptations of cetaceans to the marine environment have significant implications for their welfare. For example, adaptations for diving and going without oxygen intake for long periods, make it difficult to determine when the animal is dead. Whales may therefore survive and experience pain over a period significantly longer than suggested by the current IWC criteria for death in whales. This begs the question; are some whales still alive when hauled onto the whaling ship for flensing? \*

### **Whaling and the IWC**

The difficulties inherent in killing a large, partly submerged animal at sea give rise to severe welfare concerns. Yet, within the IWC, the welfare issues remain largely unresolved. Now whaling appears to be on the way back, with some nations wanting to see a return to commercial whaling.

Discussions on a Revised Management Scheme (RMS) intended to clear the way for the resumption of commercial whaling, and the revival in the international market for whale meat and products, are being discussed within a working group of the IWC. During these negotiations, it has been suggested that welfare concerns could be addressed simply through a data collection protocol. It is important to recognise that *the collection of data (e.g. on killing methods, times to death, etc.), will not improve or protect the welfare of whales. Instead, it can only measure the extent of the welfare problem.*

The Whalewatch coalition, a global coalition of over 140 animal welfare societies in over 55 countries, led by the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), is calling for worldwide recognition that the whaling debate is not just about numbers and conservation, but also about animal suffering. The difficulties inherent in killing a large, partly submerged animal from a moving ship on a moving sea give rise to severe welfare concerns. Due to these difficulties, the Whalewatch coalition is opposed to an RMS package that will lead to the lifting of the moratorium and the resumption of commercial whaling.

17<sup>th</sup> May 2005

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