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CARGOLUX: BELUGA WHALES SAFELY LAND IN ICELAND

CARGOLUX DELIVERS LITTLE GREY AND LITTLE WHITE SAFELY TO ICELAND ON THEIR WAY TO THE WORLD'S FIRST BELUGA WHALE SANCTUARY

SEA LIFE Trust are happy to confirm the safe arrival of two beluga whales, Little Grey and Little White, after a 6,000 mile journey from China to Iceland

- ***Little Grey and Little White are in good health after their Cargolux Airlines flight and will now continue their epic relocation from captivity to the world's first open water sanctuary for beluga whales***
- ***Following severe weather conditions in April, the re-location was re-scheduled to June.***
- ***The move heralds one of the biggest developments in captive whale and dolphin care and protection in decades and the first of its kind to be created for cetaceans.***

Wednesday 19th June: Two former captive whales, Little Grey and Little White, have safely touched down in Iceland following a 6,000 mile flight from China. The pair now face the final stage of their journey by truck and ferry to the world's first open water sanctuary for beluga whales.

The SEA LIFE Trust has today confirmed that Little Grey and Little White have arrived at Keflavik Airport (Iceland's International Airport) after having successfully completed the first leg of their landmark journey. The flight, sponsored by Cargolux Airlines Intl, landed locally this afternoon. The whales will now continue onto their new home, a large sanctuary in a natural bay on Heimaey, one of the Westman Islands, located off the southern coast of Iceland.

The two belugas were transported in custom-made slings designed to their exact physical requirements, and were then placed in tailored containers. After a lorry trip from Changfeng Ocean World to Shanghai Pu Dong airport, the whales were loaded onto a specially branded Cargolux freighter. The procedure was successful and the aircraft departed Shanghai.

Little Grey and Little White were monitored by their care teams to ensure they remained safe and comfortable throughout the 11.30-12-hour flight. A Cargolux engineer and a team of global veterinary experts with experience in transporting marine mammals were also on board, to guarantee the whale's welfare, whilst ensuring flight safety requirements were upheld.

Andy Bool, Head of SEA LIFE Trust, said: *"We're absolutely delighted Little Grey*

and Little White have safely touched down in Iceland. This is a complex but inspiring project and we've been working with the whales for months helping to prepare them for travelling to their new home.

We'll continue to carefully monitor the whales but we're pleased with their overall progress and welfare checks, which have been taking place throughout the relocation. The co-ordination of this project has been down to so many people and we're extremely grateful for all their hard work, and are thrilled this epic journey has gone as planned."

The 747-400ERF freighter plane was welcomed onto the tarmac with a ceremonial water salute from two fire trucks firing a water arc over the plane, in celebration of Iceland's newest residents' safe arrival.

Little Grey and Little White will now be transferred on board two lorries from Keflavik Airport before catching a ferry to Heimaey – off the south coast of Iceland. Once they arrive on the island, they will be placed in their dedicated sanctuary quarantine care pool for monitoring and resting after their epic journey. They will then move to their new home in the secluded open-water bay.

Richard Forson, Cargolux President and Chief Executive Officer, added: *"We are delighted that Little Grey and Little White enjoyed a seamless journey onboard our Cargolux aircraft. The success of this undertaking is the reflection of the dedication and commitment of teams across all of our organisations who worked tirelessly to make this happen.*

This epic relocation required complex logistical efforts, and we are proud to have been part of this incredible journey. We hope that Little Grey and Little White rapidly adapt to their new home and that their story will serve as a precedent for other cetaceans held in captivity."

Created in partnership with global marine wildlife charity, Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC), the *SEA LIFE TRUST Beluga Whale Sanctuary* is one of the biggest developments in captive whale and dolphin care and protection in decades and the first of its kind to be created for cetaceans.

Cathy Williamson, Whale and Dolphin Conservation's End Captivity Programme Policy Manager concluded: *"Having been originally involved in discussions about a sanctuary with SEA LIFE 20 years ago, and having helped with this beluga whale project from the beginning, WDC is naturally very excited to be part of the welcoming committee for Little White and Little Grey as they touch down in Iceland.*

The world's first whale sanctuary represents a pathway to the end of the keeping of whales and dolphins confined for entertainment. We are proud to be a partner of this important project that will improve welfare for these belugas, and show the world that there is an alternative to whale and dolphin captivity."

The sheltered bay will be the world's first open water sanctuary for beluga whales in what is a ground-breaking global marine welfare project. The bay, which measures approximately 32,000 sqm with a depth of up to 10m has been chosen to provide a more natural sub-Arctic environment and wilder habitat for these amazing whales to call home.

For more information about the *SEA LIFE TRUST Beluga Whale Sanctuary*, visit www.sealifetrust.org.

www.cargolux.com