

Imogen Sawyer, 19th October 2023

I am delighted to write and add my support to the above bill to finally bring an end to whaling in Icelandic waters – a position your predecessors sought to achieve over a hundred years ago.

Whaling in Iceland continues purely to appease the interests of a single wealthy man. Indeed, the reports produced by Icelandic authorities this year have shown time and again that it brings no benefits – not even to Kristjan Loftsson himself.

My comments predominantly refer to Hvalur hf but the reality is that should another operator enter the market (or return to the market), many of these comments would still apply. So whilst I find it surprising that this draft bill was referred to the industrial committee (realistically, whaling is no longer an industry, simply a vanity project for Kristjan Loftsson), I would like to raise the following reasons why I support this bill:

1. **Whaling has repeatedly been shown to breach animal welfare legislation.** Hvalur hf have had many opportunities to show compliance with basic legislative requirements regarding animal welfare at time of death. Despite this, MAST employees and independent observers (pre-dominantly Sea Shepherd UK/Paul Watson Foundation UK) have repeatedly documented breaches by both Hvalur 8 and Hvalur 9. The appalling statistics from the 2022 hunt speak for themselves and whilst the full report on the 2023 season is yet to be published, it has already been confirmed that 5 out of 24 whales this season (i.e. over 20% of whales) were shot twice, meaning the kill breached the law on time to death. Observers also confirmed that at least 10 whales were shot outside the permitted body region (again in breach of the regulations) and one whale was heavily pregnant. The time to death for the unborn calf will also have been in excess of 60 seconds as it will have died from oxygen starvation, rather than catastrophic impact to the vital organs. I personally anticipate further breaches to be revealed when the review of the season is publicised. Finally, the stress caused when whaling vessels are chasing the whale in order to harpoon it, further adds to the overall level of suffering caused. Taken in totality, it is simply unacceptable and it is not appropriate to continue to give Hvalur hf opportunities to improve, when they've already shown an inability to do so. Whaling is inhumane and should be stopped.
2. **Whaling has a negative impact on the economy** – whilst it does provide well-paid seasonal work for staff in the Akranes region, these workers would be better served by year round opportunities, although the continuing case brought by Akranes trade union shows this part time work is not as beneficial as Kristjan Loftsson claims. However, in terms of the national economy, it should be noted that each and every year the profit margin of Hvalur hf is reduced by the loss-making activity of whaling. i.e. **if whaling was banned, Hvalur hf would contribute more taxes to the economy.** With the appetite for whale meat decreasing across the world, including within Iceland, this situation would likely apply to any whaling operator – not just Hvalur hf.
3. **The majority of Icelanders do not support the continuation of whaling.** Of those that do, they typically cite dwindling fish stocks as the main reason. Yet whilst Kristjan has

attempted to blame whales for this many times, research undertaken on the stomach contents of fin whales landed at the station were shown to rarely contain fish. The investment arm of Hvalur hf contains shares in many companies that use large trawlers, likely the main reason that smaller fishing vessels are struggling.

4. **Dumping of chemicals and whale waste into the waters of Hvalfjordur.** Whilst Hvalur hf have a permit for the operation of the whaling station, there is a complete lack of sampling regime to assess the impact this has on the environment. Whilst the phrase 'the solution to pollution is dilution' is often used, the effluent is dumped into a shallow, poorly flushed section of the fjord, meaning the impact on local marine life will be stronger and more long lasting.
5. **Whales are important to the marine ecosystem and key in our struggle to combat climate change.** There are many reports on this and the ability of large whales to sequester carbon as 'whale fall' upon death, along with their ocean fertilisation ability to support phytoplankton growth during life. This is why [Kristín Vala Ragnarsdóttir, professor of sustainability, speaks so eloquently against whaling.](#)

I could write on for many pages, highlighting concerns about how Hvalur hf operates and how it is time to consign whaling to the history books where it belongs. But I feel I've made my point.

With kind regards.

Imogen Sawyer