



## **Belugas on board – SEALIFE Trust and Cargolux join forces for an epic journey to the world’s first open water whale sanctuary**

- **Europe’s leading all-cargo airline Cargolux becomes the official transport partner working with SEA LIFE Trust and project partner, Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC), to help move two beluga whales, Little Grey and Little White, 6,000 miles from China to Iceland in Spring 2019**
- **A specially branded plane has been unveiled which features Little Grey and Little White on a Boeing 747-400ERF freighter. The plane will help transport the two whales along with a care team to the world’s first open water sanctuary for beluga whales**

**Monday 7th January 2019:** The SEA LIFE TRUST has today announced that Europe’s leading all-cargo airline Cargolux will sponsor the flight to help relocate Little Grey and Little White the beluga whales 6,000 miles from China to Iceland in spring 2019.

The complex journey will see the two belugas move from Changfeng Ocean World in Shanghai, China, via land, air and eventually by sea to the large sanctuary in a natural bay at Heimaey, one of the Westman Islands, located off the southern coast of Iceland.

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

**Andy Bool, Head of SEA LIFE Trust, said:** “This is a complex but truly inspiring project to be working on and we are extremely grateful to Cargolux for their generosity in becoming our official transport partner and helping us move Little White and Little Grey to their new, more natural home. Cargolux has years of experience working on many of the most logistically intricate projects and their teams have been working with our animal care team, veterinarians and marine experts to ensure we provide the very best journey for Little Grey and Little White.”

Bool continues: “We have also been working with Little Grey and Little White for months preparing them for the journey which includes specialist equipment and bespoke stretchers as well as a whole host of leading animal experts who will work around-the-clock as the whales make the journey to their new home.”

**Richard Forson, Cargolux President and Chief Executive Officer added:** “Cargolux is honoured to have been entrusted with two such incredible whales. This is a ground-

breaking project and one which our animal transport experts are proud to be part of. We are meticulously preparing for the move this spring to ensure a seamless journey for Little Grey and Little White.”

This undertaking is a natural follow-up to the increasing amount of measures that the airline has taken to raise awareness about the necessity to promote conservation, preserve the environment, and fight illegal animal trade. Cargolux has a history of engagement for environmental consciousness, and animal welfare in particular. As a signatory of the UN Global Compact and a company committed to the UN’s Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals, conservation and sustainable development rank high on Cargolux’s list of priorities. Partnerships such as this one are of prime importance for the airline and reflect its engagement and that of its employees.

**Travel fact file: (Infographic can be found [here](#))**

**How will Little Grey and Little White travel from China to Iceland?**

The complex logistical challenge of transporting two beluga whales by air, land and sea is being carefully planned by a team of global experts with experience in transporting marine mammals. The 6,000-miles journey will take around 24 hours to complete - from the time Little Grey and Little White leave Changfeng Ocean World in Shanghai and arrive at the sanctuary on Heimaey Island.

- 1. The journey will begin at Changfeng Ocean World in Shanghai. Each beluga will be individually lifted onto specially designed stretchers measured to their physical requirements and carefully placed into specially built transportation boxes before they are lifted out of the aquarium by crane and placed carefully into two lorries**
- 2. Little Grey and Little White will then travel by road, from Changfeng Ocean World to Pu Dong International airport, where a specially chartered cargo plane will be waiting on the runway to fly them to Keflavik Airport in Iceland**
- 3. Following the flight, Little Grey and Little White will be transferred on to two individual lorries on a two hour drive from the airport to the ferry port and then transported by ferry from the airport to Heimaey, a crossing that takes around 30 minutes**
- 4. Once the ferry has docked on Heimaey Island, the lorries will drive a short distance to the town of Vestmannaeyjar where Little Grey and Little White will be transferred to the beluga sanctuary landside facility and placed into a special care pool so they can be assessed following their journey.**

**Project overview:**

Created in partnership with 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, WDC policy manager, concluded:** “Whales and dolphins are highly intelligent creatures and are not suited to being held in a small pool performing tricks. It is hoped that this project will help to encourage the rehabilitation of more captive whales into a more natural environment in the future, and one day bring an end to the use of

whales and dolphins for human entertainment. We are hugely grateful to Cargolux for helping to make this a reality.”

Visitors to Heimaey will be able to learn more about Little White and Little Grey and the sanctuary in a landside visitor centre which will be completed in 2019. It will offer limited and discreet viewing of the whales. This will be very carefully controlled to ensure the two whales will not be disturbed in their new and very natural environment.

Backed by a donation from Merlin Entertainments and supported by the world’s largest chain of family aquariums, SEA LIFE, the sanctuary will comprise of a stunning natural sea inlet in Klettsvik Bay and include a landside care facility and visitor centre

For more information about the *SEA LIFE TRUST Beluga Whale Sanctuary*, visit [www.sealifetrust.org](http://www.sealifetrust.org).

**-ENDS-**

**For further information please contact Andrew Boocock at Stripe Communications on 020 7655 9968 or email: [belugasanctuary@stripecommunications.com](mailto:belugasanctuary@stripecommunications.com)**

**Follow the plane and where it’s spotted by following the hashtags: #WhaleHelloPlane #BelugaFlight**

**Notes to Editors:**

**About SEA LIFE TRUST**

SEA LIFE TRUST is a registered charity (no. 1175859) working globally to protect the world’s oceans and the amazing marine life that lives within them. Our vision is of a world where our seas are healthy, protected and full of diverse life. We own and operate marine wildlife sanctuaries, run inspiring conservation campaigns and fund projects and education programmes that champion the need for plastic-free oceans, sustainable fishing, effective Marine Protected Areas and an end to over-exploitation of marine life. [www.sealifetrust.org](http://www.sealifetrust.org)

**About Cargolux**

Cargolux Airlines International, based in Luxembourg, is Europe’s leading all-cargo airline with a modern and efficient fleet composed of 14 Boeing 747-8 freighters and 16 Boeing 747-400 freighters. The Cargolux worldwide network covers over 75 destinations on scheduled all-cargo flights. The company has more than 85 offices in over 50 countries, and operates an extensive global trucking network to more than 250 destinations as well as full and part-charter services. Cargolux also offers third- party maintenance at its modern two-bay maintenance hangar in Luxembourg. The company is specialized in B747 line and hangar maintenance up to and including C-Checks. It offers a range of specialized maintenance services and holds line maintenance approval for 777 aircraft. The Cargolux Group employs close to 2,000 staff worldwide.

Press Contact:

Moa Sigurdardottir

Head of Corporate Communications

[moa.sigurdardottir@cargolux.com](mailto:moa.sigurdardottir@cargolux.com)

Phone: +352 4211 3635

www.cargolux.com

### **About WDC**

WDC, Whale and Dolphin Conservation is the leading charity dedicated to the protection of whales and dolphins, working globally through campaigns, lobbying, advising governments, conservation projects, field research, rescue, education and much more. WDC operates through offices in the UK, North America, Germany and Australia. Our vision is a world where every whale and dolphin is safe and free. [www.whales.org](http://www.whales.org)

### **About SEA LIFE**

SEA LIFE is the world's largest family of aquariums. From its origins in 1979 in Oban, Scotland, SEA LIFE now provides immersive marine experiences in nearly 50 sites in 17 countries around the world. We aim share our passion for the creatures of the oceans and to make our guests fall in love with them. [www.visitsealife.com](http://www.visitsealife.com)

### **About Merlin Entertainments plc**

Merlin Entertainments plc is a global leader in location based, family entertainment. As Europe's Number 1 and the world's second-largest visitor attraction operator we aim to deliver memorable experiences to more than 65 million visitors at 120 attractions, 18 hotels and 6 holiday villages across 25 countries. [www.merlinentertainments.biz](http://www.merlinentertainments.biz)

