

Press Release: Wednesday 24th January 2018

Eat fish not pilot whales for a healthy life say campaigners

A new campaign has been launched in the Faroe Islands today by *Grindahvalur*, an Anglo-Faroese non-profit organisation which aims to provide unbiased, up-to-date, scientifically-based information about pilot whales, toxic pollution and public health.

At the beginning of the year a billboard advertisement was erected in central Torshavn with a dramatic headline to highlight the threat posed by industrial poisons both to the whales and the people that consume whale products. It reads, 'Ávaring: Eitraður!' and warns 'Grind kann skaða heilsu tina!' It recommends people eat more fish, and not pilot whale, for a healthy life.

Now the Grindahvalur organisation has posted an information leaflet to every Faroese household which provides more information on the dangers posed by dangerous toxic pollutants that concentrate up the food-chain threatening the whales and the people eating whale products.

The *Grindahvalur* organisation produced a film of the same name introduced by Sir David Attenborough which premiered in Torshavn in 2016. It has since been screened on Faroese television three times. The film, which highlights the pollution threat to whales and people, has toured the Faroes and is available to view online at www.grindahvalur.org and through the public library service.

In the film BBC broadcaster David Attenborough suggests a possible alternative future for the Faroese and pilot whales saying:

"While hunting the pilot whale has helped the Faroese survive a harsh environment over countless generations, the very same poisons that threaten the whales now threaten the people eating them. But there is no need to end the Faroese' special relationship with the pilot whale, but simply redefine it: For these incredible animals can still provide for the Faroese through whale-watching, rather than as food, in a way that will help sustain both whales and the Faroese far into the future."

Dr Pal Weihe, Chief Physician at the Department of Occupational Medicine and Public health, has raised his concerns on this issue many times over the past 30 years. He believes that grind is now unsafe for public consumption and his views are supported by international scientific research. He says:

'What I'm hoping is that this sacrifice, to give up the traditional food, can actually be used as a message to the surrounding world; that we must be more careful with our oceans, because if humans can suffer from these pollutants then the sea mammals can suffer as well.'

Andy Ottaway an environmentalist who co-produced the film Grindahvalur said:

"The poisoning of the oceans and the whales is an ongoing tragedy that now poses a terrible threat to human health. This is not a debate about whaling, but about global pollution and a serious threat to public health. Our aim is simply to present scientifically-based facts so that the Faroese themselves can decide what is best for them and their children's future".

Runi Nielsen, a Faroese Food safety advisor and environmentalist who lives in Torshavn said:

"The future of the Faroese people depends on a healthy diet and sadly that no longer includes pilot whales. The scientific evidence and medical research clearly shows us the way. It makes no sense to kill more whales every year that we should not eat. For a healthy Faroese nation we must face facts and eat far more fish, not whales."

For further information please visit: www.grindahvalur.org

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