



7th October 2021

**Mr Bárður á Steig Nielsen,
Prime Minister of the Faroe Islands**

Prime Minister,

We are writing to you from a recently established coalition focused on promoting an end to the Grind hunts. We represent a diverse collection of interest groups and individuals who have come together to urge you, as the leader of the Faroe Islands, to end the unethical and unnecessary slaughter of dolphins and pilot whales in the Grindadráp. The killing of an unprecedented 1,428 Atlantic White Sided Dolphins in a single hunt less than a month ago has brought international shame and condemnation to the Faroe Islands from amongst the international community and even from Faroese citizens and domestic media. We are already seeing corporations withdrawing their support for Faroese products and services. The backlash has only just begun, and it will continue.

Our global campaign, the **#stopthegrind** movement, is now trending across social media and the 'Only One' petition campaign to end the hunt has in just the first two weeks received more than 278,000 signatures, while the UK parliamentary petition has received over 40,000 signatures. We currently have over 5,600 individuals and organisations that have joined our movement from all over the world and it is growing every day.

It is our view that the Grindadráp not only flies in the face of the modern spirit of environmental preservation and marine species conservation but is also widely recognized by your own scientific and medical advisors as being a significant danger to the health of the Faroese people themselves.

There are many important and interconnected reasons that the Grindadráp should be banned immediately as part of your current policy review. The most important reasons are:

- **The Grindadráp is cruel, unnecessary and against animal welfare standards (including those standards already in Faroese legislation which already apply to other animals).** While the Faroe Islands enjoy substantial natural beauty, the islands also stand out for poor environmental performance, failure to act on 'at-risk' species, and – because of the Grindadráp – are considered an 'environmental pariah.' The cruelty inherent in the Grindadráp is in direct contradiction to conventional European, Scandinavian and most countries modern animal welfare standards, including the use of spinal cord severing as a method of paralysing animals before they slowly bleed to death. The Faroese government must recognize and accept that it can no longer act in isolation and with disregard for the opinion of the rest of the world when it comes to environmental, marine species conservation and the humane treatment of animals. The welfare and preservation of dolphins and whales matters to the international community not only to restore these marine species to their historical population sizes, but also to benefit the health of ocean ecosystems and 'blue' carbon cycling and marine derived oxygen production on which we all depend. If the Faroe Islands continues this practice, your nation will continue to be shamed and the hunts documented and exposed through social media and coverage by international journalists and – further damaging the country's reputation and international standing and undoubtedly impacting the Faroese economy, in particular fisheries exports and your growing tourism industry.
- **Dolphin and whale meat is contaminated and toxic for humans, which is validated by Faroese health officials and recommendations due to its high mercury, PCB and other toxins** – In addition to the brutality and scale of the killing, the consumption of this meat is detrimental to the Faroese



people. Extensive scientific research has shown that increasing levels of marine pollution means that the meat, blubber, liver, and kidneys of pilot whales are saturated with heavy metals including mercury, PCBs, and other harmful pollutants. This contamination impairs fetal development, increases the prevalence of Parkinson's disease, and exposes consumers to a wide range of health conditions including hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and a weakened immunity. The serious risk cetacean meat poses to human beings is supported by medical professionals including the Faroese Chief Physician at the Department of Occupational Medicine and Public Health, who has previously and rightly stated that pilot whale should no longer be consumed by humans. The Faroese Food and Veterinary Authority also advise against the consumption of pilot whale more than once a month, and for women and girls planning on having childing to abstain entirely. Furthermore, Pilot whale has for many years now been sold to Faroese stores and via restaurants to be purchased and eaten by both the Faroese people and foreign tourists with no contamination testing, proper warning labels or attached health warnings, in a total breach of your 'duty of care' for your own people, and for visitors to your islands.

- **The Faroe Islands' reputation as a tourist destination and trading partner is deteriorating** – The Grindadráp hangs over the head of the Faroe Islands, increasingly having a negative impact on its draw as a tourism destination and on your nation's position as a trading partner. Retailers have already come out saying that they will not carry Faroese products, and others are reconsidering their trading relationship and fishing imports. The fact that businesses and individuals are willing to sever their ties with the Faroe Islands over the Grindadráp gives a clear indication of the strength of feeling and international unity on this issue.
- **The Grindadráp is poorly governed** – This is a hunt that has no proper oversight, no season, and no quotas. The latest Grindadráp included many younger participants that were clearly inexperienced and likely unlicensed. Although we understand some limited guidance is in place to limit pain experienced by the animals, the chaotic, inhumane, and poorly executed hunt is illustrative of the ineffectiveness of Grind regulations. The initial calculations of the dolphin pod size by those in the boats on the 12th of September was incomprehensibly wrong, even though they drove the pod for hours and for over 45km. This tragically resulted in the hunt continuing when, even in the opinion of many Faroese grind foremen, it should have been called off due to the size of the pod and the inevitable lack of people waiting on the shore to kill the animals, prolonging the animals' suffering.
- **The 'abundance' of pilot whales and Atlantic white-sided dolphins remains undetermined.** The population of long finned pilot whales – the most slaughtered species during the Grindadráp hunts – remains uncertain and poorly studied, meaning that this practice cannot be said to be sustainably managed. This is especially troubling when such small cetacean species are already facing an unprecedented combination of threats from historical hunting, industrial pollution, depletion of their natural food sources, noise pollution and the threats from bycatch and entrapment in ghost fishing gear. Furthermore, the September 12th hunt saw the unparalleled and incomprehensible killing of almost 1500 dolphins, which, to put it into scale, was in a single day nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Japanese government's quota for the entire six-month dolphin capture and killing season in Taiji, Japan (home of the now internationally infamous 'Cove') and double the number of dolphins typically killed over Taiji's 6-month season.
- **The Grindadráp stands in the way of the Faroe Islands achieving its commitment to the UN SDGs** - We can appreciate that the banning of the grind could have negative effects on Faroese cultural and tradition. However, as many other countries have done in the past, it is time for the Faroe Islands' government to recognise that the Grindadráp is not an acceptable practice. At a 2018 conference on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, you stated that: *"As a responsible member*



of the international community, the Faroe Islands, together with other nations, need to accept this challenge and to the best of our abilities try to reach these [SDG] goals...” Continuity of the Grindadráp directly opposes Sustainable Development Goals 3, 12 and 14 by undermining the health and wellbeing of the Faroe population, promoting unsustainable and irresponsible consumption practices, and threatening the conservation of life below water.

The way forward:

We believe that there is another way and positive changes should now be urgently considered by your government. We know that traditions and cultural heritage are important to national identity – however, some traditions should be consigned to the pages of history books and to displays in museums. Dolphins and pilot whales are key marine species which should be preserved and protected for the health and benefit of all people and the planet. The Faroese can and should forge a new positive cultural relationship with cetaceans and the ocean.

It has been proven time and time again that nations and societies which have beneficially turned their traditions of hunting and exploitation of nature to new practices of conservation and restoration, and in doing so have generated significant boosts to their economies from doing so. Such an approach from the Faroese government would be a win-win for the local health of the people, the tourist economy, and for the preservation of cetacean species of the Atlantic.

We - the representatives of the **#stopthegrind** coalition and the international community – implore you to use this government policy review to cease the killing of dolphins and pilot whales immediately and consign the Grindadráp to history.

Thank you for your consideration.

With best regards,

The Stop the Grind Coalition

Members of the Stop the Grind Coalition are:

Petras Austrevicius, Member of the European Parliament
Tiziana Beghin, Member of the European Parliament
Martin Buschmann, Member of the European Parliament
Villi Niinisto, Member of the European Parliament
Grace O’Sullivan, Member of the European Parliament
Jutta Paulus, Member of the European Parliament
Sylwia Spurek, Member of the European Parliament
Sea Shepherd UK, NGO
Conservative Environment Network, NGO
The Animals Voice, NGO
Blue Marine Foundation, NGO
Blue Planet Society, NGO
British Divers Marine Life Rescue Marine Organisation, NGO
Dolphin Freedom UK, NGO
Marine Mammal Care Center, NGO
Marine Connection, NGO
Ocean Asia, NGO
People's Trust for Endangered Species, NGO
Shark Guardian, NGO
Chris Packham, TV presenter and Environmentalist



Dale Vince, OBE, Founder of Ecotricity, Chairman of Forest Green Rovers FC and United Nations Climate Champion for sport.

Ross McCall, Actor/Writer/Filmmaker

Dr Amir Khan, TV presenter and influencer

Ben Goldsmith, Environmental Campaigner and Chair of the Conservative Environment Network

Deborah Meaden, Businesswoman and influencer

Marc the Vet, TV presenter and influencer

Dominic Dyer and Born Free, Environmentalist and campaigner

Love What You Eat, UK Retailer

Shared Planet, impact consultancy

Peter Egan, Actor

Phil Demers, Canadian Filmmaker

Ali Tabrizi, Filmmaker and journalist, and creator of Netflix's Seaspiracy

Steve Backshall, TV presenter and environmentalist

Tara McDonald, Singer

The Levellers

Ferocious Dog

cc:

Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius, European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries

Carmen Preising, Deputy Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Sinkevičius

Members of the European Parliament's ENVI Committee

Ms Lea Wermelin, Danish Minister for the Environment

Lars Hindkjaer, General Director of the Danish Environmental Protection Agency

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the UK government

The Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Environment Minister for the UK government