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Minister Dr. Till Backhaus
Ministry for Climate Protection, Agriculture, Rural Areas & Environment Mecklenburg-Prepommeranian
Paulshoer Weg 1
19061 Schwerin
Germany

Further Statement of the IWC Strandings Expert Panel *Humpback Whale Stranding, Poel Island, Baltic Sea, Germany April 2026*

The International Whaling Commission Strandings Expert Panel (IWC SEP) continues to monitor developments in the case of the humpback whale stranded off Poel Island, Germany. The latest developments reinforce, rather than alter, the Panel's original assessment of 7 April 2026.

Subsequent events have confirmed that repeated intervention has not resulted in sustained recovery or a successful return to safe waters. Instead, the whale has continued to re-strand and its condition has further deteriorated. These developments are consistent with the Panel's earlier conclusion that the animal was already severely compromised and that further active attempts to refloat or otherwise move the whale were unlikely to succeed and would risk causing additional suffering.

In these circumstances, the Panel reiterates that any further physical intervention must be assessed primarily in light of animal welfare. Where repeated efforts have failed and the animal remains in a severely weakened state, additional attempts to handle, move, or stimulate the whale are liable to constitute further disturbance and stress rather than meaningful rescue.

Claims that this whale can now be successfully guided over long distances to safety are not supported by the repeated re-stranding events or by the animal's deteriorating condition, and risk creating false hope and unrealistically raising public expectations. Observations of the whale should also be stopped to minimise disturbance and prioritise the animal's welfare. The Panel also emphasises that public discussion should remain grounded in the animal's clinical condition, the repeated re-stranding history, and realistic welfare-based assessment.



INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

Suite 2, First Floor,
Victory House, Vision Park,
Histon, Cambridge
CB24 9ZR, UK

t. +44 (0) 1223 233971
e. secretariat@iwc.int
<https://www.iwc.int/>

Two weeks on, the IWC SEP confirms that the position on euthanasia remains unchanged. The extraordinary logistical, personnel and public safety challenges of humanely euthanising a partially buoyant cetacean of this size in shallow waters persist, and it is not currently a viable option.

The IWC SEP again commends the professional response team who have acted with restraint and professionalism, and reiterates that calm, quiet, palliative care remains the responsible, humane, and pragmatic course in the present circumstances.

Signed on behalf of the Strandings Expert Panel

Dr. Andrew Brownlow MRCVS
Chair of the IWC SEP

Chair: Nick Gales (Australia)
Vice-Chair: Urbain Thibauthéon Arron Sonagnon Brito (Benin)
Executive Secretary: Martha Rojas Urrego