

Tekst 8

Whaling troubles

Sigrun Davidsdottir

- 1 Ask Icelanders about last week's announcement that their government plans to kill 38 minke whales for "research" purposes and they will most likely shrug their shoulders. Polls have repeatedly shown that 70%-80% of the island's 268,000 inhabitants support full commercial whaling, which could begin in 3 years' time.
- 2 But the decision to start limited "scientific whaling" was made hesitantly, because there is no international, and only a small domestic market for whale meat, and because there is concern over a clash between whale watching and whale catching.
- 3 The catch has been scaled down from the original programme that proposed to catch 200 minke whales, 200 fin whales and 100 sei whales over two years. Instead, 38 minke whales will be caught, starting this week. The commercial gain, it is acknowledged, will be next to nothing, since the catch will be run on scientific terms.
- 4 Stefan Asmundsson, commissioner for whaling, says: "The catch can in no way be seen as any threat to the Icelandic [whale] stock, which is estimated to comprise 43,000 minke whales. Opposition can hardly be based on environmental reasons.
- 5 "Without the planned catch we know for certain that our knowledge-base is not as broad as it could be. Our approach is to look at the ecosystem as a whole, in this case trying to



In demand: tourists watch a minke whale in Iceland where scientists have the go-ahead to kill 38 of the animals for research

- understand the role of the minke whales," he says.
- 6 Konrad Eggertsson, chairman of the organisation of Icelandic minke whale hunters and an active minke whale hunter until the 1985 moratorium on small whale catching, lives in Isafjordur, a struggling fishing village of 3,200 people. He stands to benefit from the catch but says that he does not wish to see nature turned into a playground for the urban population.
 - 7 "Commercial catching of minke whales is of vital importance for us, and should never have been banned. The stock isn't threatened. Minke whale meat is pure health food, full of good fatty acid and the best meat for barbecue," he says.
 - 8 Yet whaling, at least in its last years of activity, was never a major industry in Iceland. From the 15th century, foreigners were whaling in Icelandic waters, even running whaling stations there. In 1916, Iceland banned whaling to protect its dwindling stocks.
 - 9 The ban was abolished only when an Icelandic whaling company was set up in the late 1940s. Whaling was a seasonal activity and most products were exported. It amounted to roughly 2% of the export of fish products.
 - 10 But whaling in Iceland is about

- more than the right to whale, say historians. The Icelandic republic was founded in 1944 – the country had been under Danish rule – and in the Icelandic mind, the battle for independence is still going on.
- 11 “This battle is continued in the right to whale,” explains Gudmundur Halfdanarson, professor of history at the University of Iceland. “Icelanders don’t hesitate to fight for their cause, when they feel that their rights are infringed upon by foreigners. Icelandic politics has the tendency to be very patriotic. I think the Icelandic attitude towards whaling can only be understood in this light, since the commercial and the scientific gain can be disputed.”
- 12 Now, however, after decades of national agreement on the right to whale, the unanimity is broken by tourist interests. Icelanders must ask whether whale catching or whale watching serves the country’s wider interests.
- 13 Husavik is a thriving fishing village in north Iceland, with 2,500 inhabitants, two whale watching companies and a whale museum, run by Asbjorn Bjorgvinsson, which can attract up to 500 visitors daily. It is estimated that whale watching brings £5m a year to the economy and, during the summer, the industry employs 100 people.
- 14 “With no markets for whale products there is no commercial basis for whaling, so why should Icelanders jeopardise the booming business of whale watching? It is much better to ‘harvest’ whales by whale watching,” says Bjorgvinsson.
- 15 The Icelandic tourist board is certainly unhappy at the decision, fearing that western opinion will turn against a country that has in the past promoted ecotourism.
- 16 Iceland, however, has always lived off nature and is determined to continue to do so. How the two interests play out will be of national and international significance.

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- 1p **35** What becomes clear about Iceland's government from paragraphs 1-3?
- A** It has discontinued its commercial whaling programme in favour of a scientific one.
 - B** It has had to take conflicting interests into account when deciding on a whaling policy.
 - C** It has reduced Iceland's whaling activities in the face of public opposition.
 - D** It is in two minds as to the economic benefit of whaling.
- 2p **36** Op welke twee gronden verdedigt Stefan Asmundsson (alinea 4) de geplande walvisvangst?
- 1p **37** Which of the following becomes clear about Konrad Eggertsson from paragraphs 6 and 7?
- 1 He has reservations about the government plans.
 - 2 He is determined to continue whaling regardless of government policy.
- A** Only 1 is true.
 - B** Only 2 is true.
 - C** Both 1 and 2 are true.
 - D** Neither 1 nor 2 is true.
- 1p **38** What is the main point made in paragraphs 8 and 9?
- A** Iceland has a historical right to resume its whaling activities.
 - B** Balancing environmental and commercial interests has always been Iceland's prime concern.
 - C** Whaling has traditionally played a small role in Iceland's economy.
- 1p **39** Which of the following becomes clear from paragraphs 10 and 11?
- A** Iceland's stance on whaling is emotional rather than rational.
 - B** International interference has made Iceland's whaling issue difficult to handle.
 - C** The Icelanders consider whaling an essential part of their cultural heritage.
 - D** Whaling has always been a delicate issue between Iceland and Denmark.
- 2p **40** "the two interests" (alinea 16, laatste zin).
Welke twee belangen worden bedoeld?
- 1p **41** What is the main purpose of the article?
- A** To advocate restrictions with regard to the killing of whales in Icelandic waters.
 - B** To criticise Iceland's decision to resume whaling for scientific purposes.
 - C** To explain Iceland's dilemmas with regard to whaling.