

# PRESSRELEASE SF MARINA



## SF Marina builds a different sanctuary

SF Marina is known internationally for their strong and secure marinas around the world, from the freezing arctic to the heat of the tropics, often a sanctuary during storms for sailing boats and yachts. Now they are in the process of building something completely different but with the same set of demands.

An open water sanctuary for two beluga whales is to be opened in Iceland in march 2019 – this project is the first of its kind. Conservation charity Sea Life Trust has spent six years developing a plan to bring the 12 year-old belugas, nicknamed “Little White” and “Little Grey”, from captivity in China to an open water refuge.

The project is a collaboration between Vestmannaeyjarbær town and Merlin, a company which specializes in running amusement parks. The group working on it consists of marine biologists, whale experts, agents from the local tourism industry and other experts. Merlin recently bought Changfeng Ocean World in Shanghai, China, where the beluga whales were kept. In accordance with the company’s animal welfare policy they won’t keep them. It’s against their policy that whales and dolphins are taken from the wild and used for show.

A presentation about the sanctuary project posted online says the whales, which have a life expectancy of between 35 and 50 years in the wild, will always be restricted to the sea pen: “Our Belugas will never be able to be released due to their dependency on humans, we simply want to retire them from public performances in line with our values.”

The whales are currently being introduced to equipment such as stretchers to prepare them for transportation. They are also being trained to hold their breath under water for longer and swim faster so that they will better cope with tides and currents at the sanctuary.

We are extremely proud to take part of this project, says Michael Sigvardsson CEO, SF Marina. We feel that this project is validating our vision with sustainable access to the sea and it shows the width of applications where our environmentally friendly pontoons can be used.

Last year, Klettsvik Bay in Iceland’s Westman islands, was chosen as the site for a 32,000 square-metre sea pen that will become home to the whales. Building work in the bay has already begun and is expected to be completed in March 2019.

We have already built several projects in this region says Kristján Óli Hjaltason (Króli) representative for SF Marina in Iceland. This project is using our knowledge and experience in the best way and there is a different sense of satisfaction knowing that we are creating the best possible circumstances.

This is not the first time the Westman Islands host a whale. In 1998 it was the home to Keiko, an orca (killer whale) made famous in the three Free Willy movies (1993, 1995, 1997). After his movie career he was sent to Iceland to be rehabilitated and dehumanized so he could be released back into the wild, which happened in 2002.

<https://www.sfmarina.com/projects/>

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