

Stranded dolphin rescued from muddy inlet.

At around 11:40 on Friday 16 February, a lone common dolphin was reported to British Divers Marine Life Rescue circling in the shallows in an inlet at Place, near Portscatho, in Cornwall. A couple of volunteer Marine Mammal Medics were sent down initially to monitor the animal in hope it would be able to get away by itself, and further assess the situation.

After an hour and a half or so of observation, the risk of stranding increased significantly as the tide went out as the inlet is very shallow, muddy and almost completely dries out over low tide. Therefore, a larger response team was dispatched with more equipment in preparation for a stranding. Indeed, the animal did soon strand in the mud and fell onto its side, submerging the blowhole. Luckily the team were on hand to help get it upright again quickly, then bring it ashore for a health assessment and to begin providing first aid. No obvious injuries could be found and it measured 2.03m, later confirmed as female.

The team were soon joined by two vets, who were able to confirm the animal to be in moderate nutritional condition and appeared otherwise okay following a more detailed health check, and so was suitable for the team to attempt to refloat. However, it was not possible to refloat it safely in the inlet due to the nature of the geography, substrate and tide there it seemed the most likely reason this dolphin had stranded was due to getting disoriented in this location, and would struggle to get out again. Luckily a local resident had his boat tender moored nearby and was happy to use it a transport craft to take the dolphin out to deeper water.

With help, the boat was slid across the mud and launched near the mouth of the inlet. A surfboard was placed on one side with a soft mat on top for the dolphin to lie comfortably on during the journey. When ready, the dolphin was carried across in a tarpaulin, transferred to a mesh stretcher and loaded on board with a team of four Medics including a vet.

The boat then carefully made its way out to the mouth of the Percuil River, facing into Carrick Roads and close to open sea, which was the most ideal site for release where the chance of returning and restranding was lower. The dolphin was carefully hauled overboard in the stretcher and held alongside briefly, though as she started kicking strongly almost straight away it was hard to keep hold and so she was released quickly. The boat retreated and the team observed her circling in the middle of the channel until she was lost from sight. The team returned to the inlet before darkness fell.

The area will be monitored over the weekend for resightings or restrandings, but it is hoped that she will recover successfully and continue back out to sea. In the meantime BDMLR would like to thank the volunteer team, local residents and members of the public for all their efforts and support throughout this incident.

-ENDS-

Please credit photos/videos as per the name in the media file name.

For further information please contact Dan Jarvis (BDMLR) on 07810 460603 or dan@bdmlr.org.uk

British Divers Marine Life Rescue is an international marine animal rescue organisation based in the UK and is a registered charity. The aims of the organisation are to provide a

rescue service for marine wildlife, to support existing rehabilitation centres and to develop new methods of rescue, treatment, transport and care. Website www.bdmlr.org.uk.