

Dolphin Mass Stranding, Valley, Anglesey

At around 8:40 on 31 January, British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) were alerted to a mass stranding of six common dolphins at Valley, near Holyhead, on the island of Anglesey in North Wales.

A response team of volunteer Marine Mammal Medics were dispatched to the scene to assess the situation and provide first aid to the animals, while a team from RAF Valley were also asked to attend for support as they were closer to the site. Meanwhile, members of the public already on scene were provided with advice over the phone on what to do until they arrived.

Common dolphins are a gregarious species found in abundance especially along the west coast of the UK. They can reach 2.5m and weigh up to 150kg. Mass strandings may occur for a number of reasons, including an ill or injured member of a group being followed by the others into danger, human activity, or simply by becoming disoriented in unfamiliar habitat such as intertidal estuarine environments. Part of the response to a stranding is to carefully assess these various factors in relation to the animal's health and behaviour to determine why they may have beached, as this can affect how the incident is managed.

The BDMLR team carried out a health check of each individual animal as best they could, as the incoming tide began refloating them soon after their arrival. Generally they appeared to be in good health except one with an old healed wound where it had lost its dorsal fin some time ago, which appeared to be underweight and struggled in the water once they were swimming again.

The pod was monitored by volunteers from the safety of the shore and a vet attended the scene. Two dolphins disappeared in the early afternoon on high tide and could not be located, while the remaining four stayed close to shore. At around 4:40pm, as the team became anxious they would restrand on the outgoing tide, so a few Medics in personal protective equipment entered the shallows to help redirect them out to open water. The group finally turned seaward and headed out of sight into deeper water shortly afterwards.

This morning, 1 February, one of the pair of dolphins that disappeared earlier on in the incident was sadly found deceased nearby. It will be collected for a post mortem examination with our colleagues at the Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme. The team will remain on standby in case the others run into further difficulty, but in the meantime we would like to thank all BDMLR volunteers, RAF Valley personnel, Milfeddygon Bodrwnsiwn Veterinary Group, Cemaes Bay Coastguard Search and Rescue Team and members of the public for their support during this incident.

-ENDS-

**For further information please contact us on 01825 765546.
(Please press 2 for press queries).**

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. Email info@bdmlr.org.uk.

British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR), registered Charity England and Wales (803438), Scotland (SC039304).