



## TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS

# Floating on air!

*Continued from front page*

We hope that the Canary Islands will be the second" explained Gerardo Morales Hierro, the administrator of Ciwigs. This new technology uses the aerodynamics created between the wings and the water surface to take off from the water. The vehicle flies above the water surface, on a kind of air cushion, without being in direct contact with it. The flying boat can reach speeds of up to 200 kilometres per hour. A trip between the two Canarian capitals Santa Cruz and Las Palmas de Gran Canaria would then take only 30 minutes, twice as fast as the current fast ferry.

In addition, this means of transport, which looks like an aircraft but is considered a boat, could improve the connections to and between the smaller islands. Canary Island Wigs has ordered four M80 flying boats, which will initially operate between the two metropolises. They have a capacity for six passengers and two crew members. The 750hp engine has a range of 650 kilometres due to its super efficient fuel usage. If the engine were damaged, the machine would simply slide back onto the water surface. It has a triple hull design that prevents rollover. Ciwigs is



↑ Pablo Rodríguez is committed to the certification of the flying boat

currently planning 40 rides a day between the major cities. In the winter, operations are expected to take place from 7am to 6.30pm and in the summer until 8pm. In winter, bad weather conditions with

storms can be avoided as the flying boat only rises to a height of 100 metres.

No prices have yet been fixed. According to Morales Hierro's estimate, the airfare for residents would be around €50. If further routes were to be extended, for example, it would only take twelve minutes to travel from Los Cristianos to San Sebastián de La Gomera and 37 minutes to Valverde in El Hierro. To moor, the flying boats only need a simple jetty. Another advantage is that the flying boat is environmentally friendly and would not collide with sperm whales or other marine mammals. ■



## CETACEANS

# More care needed

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Sperm whales are often seen in Canarian waters and they stay for increasingly longer periods. As a rule, they are most likely to be seen from February/March until the summer months. The animals can grow to up to 15 metres in length and weigh up to 40 tons. They are not usually interested in boats and avoid their proximity, as this is the critical moment when they can easily become the victims of ferries and speedboats. The animals live as loners and in waters rich in fish, although it can be that several specimens live relatively close to each other. Sperm whales can dive to depths of up to 1,000 metres and feed mainly on squid. This case was not an isolated one. Only a few days later, another dead sperm whale was also washed up on the coast of La Bajita in the borough of Villa de Mazo in La Palma. This animal was nine metres long and weighed about ten tons. It had been dead for a long time. The cause of death will now be clarified by veterinarians at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC). Shortly before the editorial deadline, a third marine mammal was washed ashore by the tide. This time it was a pilot whale that was found dead on Playa de La Jaquita in El Médano. This cause of death also needs further investigation.

Researchers have long been calling for stricter rules to protect marine mammals in Canary Island waters, for example, regarding speed limits near the coast or anti-collision measures. Vidal Martín Martel, President of the Canary Islands Society for Cetacean Research in the Canary Islands, estimates that between the years 2000 and 2015, around 42 sperm whales died as a result of collisions with boats. Veterinarian and researcher Manuel Arbelo cites shipping and fishing incidents as the main causes of dead cetaceans in Canary Island waters. Lawyer Alejandro Quintana also warns of a worrying increase in dead cetaceans in the Canary Islands. That is why counter-measures are urgently required from various sides. Just this March, the 28-year-old environmental lawyer Quintana submitted a pioneering petition to the Canary Islands Parliament and a coordination committee was set up, but it's not enough for the critical lawyer. He regrets that his second proposal, a protocol to prevent collisions between boats and marine mammals, was not adopted. There is still much to be done to effectively protect marine mammals off the Canary Island coasts. ■

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