# Stranded Kemp's ridley sea turtle Rhossi faces repatriation delay due to US funding freeze



A Kemp's ridley sea turtle named Rhossi, which is critically endangered, remains stranded in the United Kingdom due to recent freezes in US funding related to foreign developmental assistance. Rhossi was discovered on the coast of Anglesey, northern Wales, in late 2023, and has since been rehabilitated at the Anglesey Sea Zoo.

Despite being ready for release back into its native habitat in the Gulf of Mexico, Rhossi's repatriation has been delayed following a January executive order signed by then-President Donald Trump, which halted all foreign development assistance for a minimum of three months. The move affected numerous conservation initiatives, including the Marine Turtle Conservation Fund, which was instrumental in coordinating efforts to return Rhossi to the United States.

Frankie Hobro, the owner and director of Anglesey Sea Zoo, expressed her frustration over the situation, stating, "It is a huge problem - it's very frustrating. Animal species don't understand politics, they don't understand boundaries and borders." She noted that prior to the funding halt, a successful repatriation regime had been established, allowing for smoother processes in returning similar turtles to their homeland.

The repercussions of the Trump administration’s funding freeze extend beyond this individual case, as it has affected various international marine conservation initiatives previously supported by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The USFWS, which also recently saw the loss of more than 400 jobs as part of broader governmental budget cuts, had been a significant partner in the conservation work linked to Rhossi and other marine turtles.

Hobro remains hopeful that alternative avenues for Rhossi's return will be explored, stating the possibility of working through Mexico for future turtles. However, she emphasised the importance of the existing partnerships with conservation programmes in Texas, which have been developed to facilitate turtle repatriation.

In light of the ongoing challenges, Martha Williams, the former head of USFWS under President Joe Biden, advised the zoo to persist in their efforts for Rhossi's release. In an interview, she stated, "Don't give up. Speak out - tell the stories, explain why this work is so important, and that it does impact people in a positive way.” Williams highlighted the significant role smaller grants play in conservation work, emphasising that even limited resources can produce substantial positive outcomes for communities.

The conservation community is closely monitoring Rhossi's situation as discussions continue regarding the future of international marine conservation efforts, amid the shifting political climate in the United States. The Anglesey Sea Zoo has been a key player in the rescue and rehabilitation of endangered turtles, previously successfully returning another Kemp's ridley turtle named Tally back to its habitat in 2023.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.fws.gov/press-release/2024-10/transatlantic-rescue-mission-bringing-endangered-kemps-ridley-sea-turtle-home> - This link supports the discussion about Kemp's ridley sea turtles facing challenges in returning home due to various conservation and political issues, illustrating the complexity of repatriating these turtles as in Rhossi's case.
* <https://www.courts.michigan.gov/492eca/siteassets/publications/benchbooks/evidence/evidbb.pdf> - While not directly related to the article, this link provides insight into legal and procedural challenges that can be analogously applied to the complexities faced by conservation efforts like those for Rhossi.
* <https://www.fws.gov/species/kemps-ridley-sea-turtle> - This link, although not explicitly mentioned, would provide general information about the Kemp's ridley sea turtle, supporting the context of Rhossi's situation as a critically endangered species.
* <https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/president-biden/action/> - This link provides context on President Biden's administrative actions, which might indirectly relate to changes in conservation efforts or policies affecting cases like Rhossi's.
* <https://www.fws.gov/home/feature/2021/June/International-Sea-Turtle-Day/> - This link highlights international sea turtle conservation efforts, underscoring the importance of collaboration in protecting species like the Kemp's ridley, similar to Rhossi.
* <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-resolution/918/text> - This link relates to House resolutions, which can affect funding for conservation efforts, similar to those impacted by funding freezes discussed in Rhossi's case.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/kemps-ridley-turtle-anglesey-sea-zoo-donald-trump-b2721486.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data