

Science Festival Report 2010



Oban, 21-31 May 2010

Conceptualised and coordinated by

The Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS)

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Summary

Oban's first Festival of the Sea ran from 21 – 31 May 2010, with a preparatory educational component running from February 2010 in all local primary schools. The Festival was organized and funded mostly by SAMS, the Scottish Government and Argyll and the Islands LEADER, with additional support from Yeoman Glensanda (Aggregate Industries) and Live Literature (Scottish Book Trust). A steering committee representing public, commercial and charitable organizations with marine related interests advised and supported the festival organization team.

The festival – conceptualized from the outset as a community event to access hard-to-reach rural audiences – benefited fundamentally from its wide partnership with a large number of local organizations, businesses and agencies putting on events at their own expense and providing other in-kind support. Parents, teachers and children in particular put enormous effort into learning about and celebrating our marine environment, making this inaugural Festival of the Sea a huge success.

The Festival of the Sea 2010 at a glance

- A new initiative that delivered a well coordinated and widely advertised festival
- The educational programme directly involved nearly 1,200 primary school children
- 54 events were delivered around Oban over a 10 day period
- Six school competitions formed part of the festival
- 4,113 people actively attended festival events
- Over 35,000 visitors came in contact with our exhibition displays

Acknowledgements

Main funders: Scottish Government, Argyll and the Islands LEADER, SAMS

Additional funders: Yeoman Glensanda, Live Literature



Other partners:

- Alice Strange (artist)
- Argyll Voluntary Action
- Arduaine Garden
- Argyll and Bute Council
- Caledonian Hotel, Oban
- Caledonian MacBrayne
- Caledonian Oysters
- GRAB (Group for Recycling in Argyll and Bute) Trust
- Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust
- Historic Scotland
- Institute of Physics
- Jane Rose (artist)
- Kilmartin House Museum
- Lismore Historical Society
- Local Origins Rural Network (LORN)
- Loch Visions
- Norman Bissell (poet)
- Northern Lighthouse Board
- Oban and Lorn Tourism Association
- Oban Gaelic Choir
- Oban Lifeboat Station
- Oban Sailing Club
- Open Ground
- Rotary Club of Oban
- Royal Zoological Society of Edinburgh
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network
- Scottish Sea Farms
- Scottish Sea Life Sanctuary, Barcaldine
- Seafari Adventures
- Seafreedomkayak
- Seil Natural History Group
- Stramash
- Three Wee Crows Theatre Group
- Victoria Clare Bernie (artist)
- Waterfront Restaurant
- Waterstone's – Oban
- Waverley Paddle Steamer
- Waypoint Seafood Grill & Bar

Introduction

Oban is a small rural town on the west coast of Scotland whose natural history, climate, heritage, folklore, and past, present and future prosperity are significantly dependent on the marine environment.

Despite significant but seasonal tourism, the area is poor in events – especially for the local community – and a lifestyle dominated by community groups and children’s activities dominates. As a consequence events put on in Oban are often poorly attended. While the area plays host to the Scottish Association for Marine Science, Scotland’s premier independent marine science organization that also runs the country’s only honours degree course in marine science, and is further seeing an expansion in R&D companies focusing on marine biotechnology, public engagement with and education in marine science remains poor. This affects both staff recruitment for a growing sector and awareness of what is locally available. Past events aimed at remedying this situation were often attended by the section of society already well educated in marine science rather than the actual target groups.

To take the message to the heart of this difficult to reach rural community, a Festival of the Sea was developed in discussion with many local agents. For the event to be successful discussions suggested full integration into the school curriculum and events that linked existing groups together. Turning it into a community event run by rather than for the community was perceived as potentially more successful and certainly more affordable than a centrally organized and conceptualized ‘marine science’ festival. There was an underlying and integrated understanding that marine science was fundamental to most events being put on but not in an overt way. This way would allow easier access to a hesitant population.

SAMS’ seasons for running the festival were numerous, including:

- Building trust and understanding with the local community
- Developing public appreciation of the relevance of our research
- Enhancing our reputation
- Being accountable to the tax payer
- Creating awareness of our facilities, links and study opportunities
- Supporting the government’s STEM initiatives

Aims and objectives

The Festival of the Sea aim was to deliver a popular and community-based 10-day-long festival *celebrating* our marine environment and heritage.

There were six specific festival objectives:

1. To increase awareness of the importance of the sea on a local, regional and global scale
2. To engender pride and stewardship in the community towards their local marine environment
3. To excite young audiences about careers based around the sea and in science
4. To provide a discussion forum on how to manage multiple and conflicting uses of the sea
5. To empower participants to understand and question latest advances in marine research
6. To make people associate Oban with the marine environment, marine research and education



Programme structure

A) Education programme

The festival coincided with the first year of the Curriculum for Excellence in our primary schools and provided an excellent format for the schools to develop a multi-disciplinary theme. One local primary school head teacher was on the steering committee for the festival and organized a sub-committee including a further two head teachers and the SAMS organizing team to agree the cornerstones for the education programme.

All 14 local primary schools feeding into Oban High School – representing 1,029 children – studied ‘the sea’ during the spring term as agreed by the local head teachers’ forum nearly a year ahead of the festival. The group decided on a theme to support the Scottish Government’s strategic objectives:

“The sea – making Scotland healthier (P1-2), greener (P3-5) and wealthier (P6-7)”.

SAMS organised a marine awareness day for 25 primary school teachers in February to support them with specific knowledge and skills for developing their theme. A total of 28 SAMS staff, members and students - specifically trained in public engagement - then developed three new workshops that were delivered 39 times to reach all children in all contributing schools.

For P1 and P2: Healthy foods from the sea

For P3, P4, P5: The marine environment: food webs and conservation

For P6 and P7: Prosperity and the sea: exploring marine energy

The renewables workshop was also delivered once to home educated children, and we also included a visit to a group of children with severe learning difficulties, bringing the number of workshops delivered by SAMS up to 41. We further facilitated visits from the GRAB Trust exploring marine litter with the P3-P5 age group, while Live Literature Funding took a local poet to Easdale Primary School to help them construct poems about the sea.

Learning was further supported by competitions for each age group, ranging from pre-5 to P7. The competition entries became part of the May festival:

Pre-5: Group marine frieze - exhibited at the Sea Life Sanctuary

P1-2: Models of marine creatures - exhibited at the Sea Life Sanctuary

P3-4: Marine dance - performed during the opening event

P5: Marine costume design & documentation - worn for opening parade

P6: Marine poetry - school winners read out during opening event

P7: Public speaking - evening event as part of Festival (Rotary hosted)

During the festival the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland’s Wild Bus visited local Brownie groups and primary schools, while the Institute of Physics Lab in a Lorry visited Oban High School for a period of two days.

Several follow-up visits to schools and to local beaches with school classes happened after the festival in support of the marine theme and supported by SAMS staff – many of which had joined the STEM ambassador scheme to formalize their outreach activities.

Below are some images showing children's festival related activities and achievements:



Pre-5 marine frieze



P1-2 marine model class activities



P1-2 marine model



Exhibition of friezes & models



Opening parade



P5 marine costumes



P3-4 marine dance show



P7 public speaking finalists:
"Wealth from the sea"

B) Festival programme

To put the festival programme together required inspiring a range of individuals and groups from the public, private and third sector to engage with the aims and objectives of the festival. These people eventually started to act as festival ambassadors and spread the word further so that offers for events kept coming in. As a community festival we took an early decision not to 'reject' offers but to support them in improving events where we felt quality could be an issue.

As a consequence the programme consisted of 52 events plus four small exhibitions and advertised regular events like marine wildlife tours and the 'Seafood Capital of Scotland' campaign for Oban's seafood restaurants.

The Festival of the Sea 2010 had the following type of events:

- Open days (7)
- Talks (15)
- Debates (1)
- Excursions (13)
- Workshops (10)
- Exhibitions (5)
- Performances (theatre, music, dance, poetry) (6)
- Marine sports (3)
- Beach cleans (1)

For a full programme go to: www.marinesciencefestival.com

Event venues

While most events were delivered in Oban, the festival aimed to spread across the area. Individual events were delivered ranging from Dunadd (near Kilmartin) in the south to Appin in the north (nearly 50 miles), and from Tobermory on the Isle of Mull to Loch Awe in the east (44 miles excluding sea area). The map below shows most of the venue locations.



Events were held in town and village halls, churches and church halls, cafes, hotels and restaurants, club huts, a sealife centre, a ferry terminal, school rooms, on boats, in laboratories, in artist studios, at historic sites, and within various business premises, as well as outside.

While some venues were better than others, surveys found all venues suitable and often the only alternative to running all events centrally – contrary to the spirit of a community festival.

Communication efforts ahead of the event made sure that all venues were safe and the vast majority of venues accessible to everyone. Some outdoor events required physical fitness which was clearly stated in the programme.

Audience participation

Overall festival events attracted 4,113 visitors excluding trips on the Waverley (which are booked out every year at Oban and are thus no specific festival events) and also excluding the over 37,000 visitors who came into contact with the festival through exhibitions in the Caledonian MacBrayne ferry terminal in Oban, at the Scottish Sea Life Sanctuary, or in Alice Strange's studio.

In general terms, weekend events were attracting the largest audiences, especially some of the open days, e.g. at SAMS, the Northern Lighthouse Board and at Oban Marina on the bank holiday Monday.

The education programme delivered workshops to 1,050 children and trained 25 teachers. No numbers are available for children benefiting from additional visits or workshops, and the number also excludes the five nursery groups who engaged with the topic by participating in the competition.

The total counted 'audience' number for the Festival of the Sea is thus 5,188.

Date	Event	Visitor numbers
Sat 20 Feb	Marine awareness day – primary school teachers	25
March	41 workshops to primary school children	1050
Fri 21 May	Opening parade	150 spectators (+350 children/teachers)
	Opening event by Oban children	475
	Songs of the Sea, Tobermory	51
	Oban Passport launch / photo exhibition	40
	Colonsay lecture cruise	39 (75 booked ceilidh)
Sat 22 May	Lifeboat open day	200
	Sailing club open day	125
	Northern Lighthouse Board open day	383
	Canoeing and Coastering with Stramash x 2	18
	Songs of the Sea, Seil	50
Sun 23 May	Lismore Shipping Heritage Day	8
	Silurian open day	60
	Songs of the Sea, Oban	32
	Learn to cook in a real restaurant	8
Mon 24 May	Lecture – Bottlenose dolphins	18
	Beach clean	9
Tue 25 May	Lecture – Coping with sea level change	10
	Lab in a lorry (Oban High School)	119
	The Wild Bus	50
	Garden adaptation & climate	CANCELLED (Illness)
	Scottish marine biodiversity evening (lectures)	40

Wed 26 May	Lecture – Whale and dolphin research	18
	Try sea kayaking	7
	Lab in a lorry (Oban High School)	114
	The Wild Bus	89
	Gaelic workshop – songs of the sea	4
	Talk: The sea, the sea, its lure for artists	20
Thu 27 May	Lecture – giant squid growth	10
	The Wild Bus	70
	Wealth from the sea public speaking competition	48
	Talk – Women and the sea	10
Fri 28 May	Geological tour of the Isle of Kerrera	22
	Visit an oyster farm	7
	Crab to crow photography workshop x 2	16
	Lecture: Too much fertiliser in the sea?	11
	Sustainable seafood and ecolabelling debate	19
	Theatre: The three wee crows	58
Sat 29 May	SAMS open day	650
	Storming the castle	124
	Kilmartin Gala Day	Not gathered
	Trips on the Waverley	
	Aquaculture 2010 – film installation	15
Sun 30 May	Seil island marine event (5 lectures)	50
	Aquaculture 2010 – film installation	21
	Seafari adventures boat tour	80
	Dunadd – heart of the sea kingdom	49
	Land and sea – walk along the seashore	7
	Learn to cook in a real restaurant	10
	Trips on the Waverley	
Mon 31 May	Oban marina event	600
	Trips on the Waverley	
	Ceilidh na Mara	98
ALL DAYS	TOTAL EVENT VISITORS	5,188
EXHIBITIONS	Calmac photographic exhibition	35,000
	Marine art by kids – Sea Life Sanctuary	1910
	Jane Rose exhibition – Sea Life Sanctuary	As above
	Alice Strange Exhibition: earth, sea and sky	125

Event impact

Festival contributor numbers

Staff:	78
Students:	15
Volunteers:	146
Steering committee:	10
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TOTAL:	249

Media coverage

- Scottish Field: Colour feature comprising A4 advert about Festival of the Sea in May 2010 issue, accompanied by 11-page feature on Oban including editorial and advertising.
- BBC Alba TV news report – An La: A news feature covering the children’s costume parade through Oban and conversations with local Gaelic speakers, including teachers and their gaelic medium pupils taking part in the parade. The reporter also spoke to the co-ordinator of the festival about the reasons behind the festival. This was aired on Monday 24th May at 8pm in the main BBC Alba news programme, An La.
- Oban FM: There were four conversational slots with Oban FM on the afternoons of Wed 19th, Friday 21st, Wed 26th and Friday 28th May. Three SAMS scientists and the Festival Director joined Coll McDougall during his show.
- Oban Times:
Thursday 6th May - “SAMS promises biggest and best Open Day” - an article featuring the SAMS Open Day one of the largest events taking place during the Festival of the Sea.

Thursday 13 May - Double-page advertising feature in the run-up to the Festival with editorial, full programme and participant advertising.

Thursday 13th May – front page and page two photo of Director and Co-ordinator of the Festival with feature on page two.

Thursday 20 May – Editor’s Comment column – “First Festival of the Sea is for local people” – encouraging locals to go out and enjoy the festival. McCaig’s column also had a section called “On, in and under the Sea” devoted to supporting the festival and encouraging people to attend.

- Argyllshire Advertiser
“Fun and Games at Kilmartin Gala Day” – A report with photos in 4th June issue about the Kilmartin Gala Day which was held on Sat 29th May during Festival of the Sea.
- Oban Marina
News release from Oban Marina entitled, “Oban Marina’s ‘Fun in the Sun’ Open Day Concludes Oban’s First Festival of the Sea” went to Scottish news editors.

Plans for the future

The Festival of the Sea gathered momentum when it became clear to locals that it was being successful, and we had numerous inquiries from organizations and businesses who wanted to contribute in future years. We also had great interest from the tourism industry to develop it further to attract not only locals but increasingly also tourists. There is great local support for the Festival to become a regular event, and great disappointment when he announced that we would not run it in 2011.

In 2011 the Festival organizing team will be heavily engaged in developing a new exhibition and outreach facility called 'The Scottish Ocean Explorer Centre' and thus cannot organize a Festival for May 2011. We had looked for other organizers but unfortunately none of the contributing organizations had the capacity and expertise to organize such a sizeable event. We thus had to decide not to run a Festival of the Sea in 2011. However, we plan to run the 2nd Festival of the Sea in 2012, when we hope the funding situation for science festivals is known and when we plan to operate the Festival coordination from the Scottish Ocean Explorer Centre.

The education programme involving primary schools has been discussed to move onto a 3 yearly rotation. In 2012 we plan to involve the High School instead of primaries and have already gained general consent for this from both the Head Teacher and the Head of Science.

Finance

The costs of organizing the Festival of the Sea were met exactly by the income – due to a commitment from SAMS to cover ‘remainder’ costs.

Table 1. Festival costs in £ excluding in kind contributions

Category	Cost (£)
Venue hire	1695.63
Advertising	6863.99
Signage	2957.74
Programme etc	1194.87
Fees	300.00
Transport contributors	2421.71
School transport	908.50
Prizes	424.50
Staff costs	6114.87
Coordination cost	8089.32
TOTAL	30,971.13

Table 2: Value of contributions in £ from the funding organisations

Funder	Value (£) of contribution
Scottish Government	15000
LEADER Argyll and the Isles	8450
Glensanda (Aggregate Industries)	1200
Live Literature	88.13
SAMS	6233
TOTAL	30,971.13

Anuschka Miller
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