

Orkney Marine Mammal Research Initiative



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marine mammals are present year-round in Orkney waters. Despite this and a public appetite to know more about the marine life in our seas, little is known about residency patterns and abundance levels of cetaceans and pinnipeds and the impact of localised anthropogenic pressures on these.

Orkney Marine Mammal Research Initiative is a local organisation, in the process of applying to become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) with OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator).

Vision

Decision makers, researchers, local organisations and the general public have an awareness and knowledge of marine mammals in Orkney waters and a desire to work together to protect them.

Mission

Working to protect marine mammals in Orkney through research and education.

Aims

- ◆ Use citizen science and education to encourage members of the community to become 'Stewards of the Sea'
- ◆ Actively undertake research
- ◆ Use an evidence based approach to help protect Orkney's marine mammals
- ◆ Secure long-term funding to ensure the continuation of research

INTRODUCTION

Marine mammals are present year-round in Orkney waters. Despite this and a public appetite to know more about the marine life in our seas, little is known about residency patterns and abundance levels of cetaceans and pinnipeds and the impact of localised anthropogenic pressures on these. As part of the process of establishing Orkney Marine Mammal Research Initiative (OMMRI), a working group was established to map out the current position, horizon scan and develop a five year business plan. The following document details the subsequent business plan and associated financials.

CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES AND MISSION STATEMENT

Orkney Marine Mammal Research Initiative is a local organisation, in the process of applying to become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) with OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator) with the purposes of:

- ◆ The advancement of science through the research and monitoring of the distribution, abundance and habitat use of marine mammals, and factors affecting their conservation, especially in Orkney.
- ◆ The promotion of heritage, arts and culture, through the themes of marine mammals, the marine environment and conservation.
- ◆ The advancement of environmental protections and improvements for marine mammals and the marine environment, especially in Orkney, and the promotion of conservation to the public.
- ◆ The advancement of marine mammal welfare through research and education.
- ◆ The advancement of education and research relating to marine mammals and the marine environment, including citizen science programmes, community engagement, school outreach programs and volunteering opportunities within Orkney.
- ◆ And any other purpose that may be reasonably regarded as analogous to any of the preceding purposes.

Mission: Working to protect marine mammals in Orkney through research and education.

Following meetings between Orkney-based individuals with an interest in cetaceans and marine mammals in general, it was recognised that a locally based charitable organisation was required to undertake a coordinated approach to developing research and obtaining data to aid understanding of the marine mammals within Orkney's waters and how best to support them.

OMMRI recognises that a range of data and services is already available from a number of national organisations but that the availability of data and the relevance of this to Orkney is limited. It is also recognised that local residents lack access to resources to learn about the marine mammals in the seas surrounding their islands; and visitors to the isles are often frustrated in their hopes of seeing and learning more.

Our role will be to undertake research and collate data relating to marine mammals within Orkney, in partnership with the local community and national organisations, encouraging a culture of stewardship that utilises an evidence based approach to protect Orkney's marine mammals.

OMMRI is keen to foster and develop partnership working approaches with local businesses, statutory organisations and third sector partners to ensure efficiency and best practice methods of working on marine matters. Early contact has already been established with a number of organisations and these relationships will be further developed as the organisation progresses.

OUR CURRENT POSITION

As an emerging charity with big aspirations, we need to ensure we start off strongly. Effort is being invested now on policies, planning and training to ensure that we have at our disposal the skills and structure the organisation will need to be successful in achieving its charitable objectives over the long term and hopefully enable a smoother 'start up' process in the short term.

With a clear vision in mind and a strong Trustee team at the helm, the time is now right to launch our organisation and take forward the work identified within this five year plan.

MARINE MAMMALS IN ORKNEY

Since the decline of widespread commercial whaling, people have become increasingly concerned about the impact of other forms of human activities on cetaceans and how to reduce these impacts. Populations of some species are now showing signs of recovery, whilst others are showing clear signs of decline, as reflected by varying IUCN statuses.

Whales and dolphins are regularly sighted in Orkney water, with photos and updates regularly posted on social media. The waters surrounding these isles are some of the fastest flowing in the world and are heavily used by inter-island ferries, visiting cruise ships, creel and fishing boats, pleasure boats and oil tankers, as well as being used for oil rig maintenance and to test tidal and wave energy devices. Orkney's waters are also home to 22 salmon farms. At the time of writing, whale watching trips are not commercially offered within Orkney.

Seals are a common sight along our shore lines and Orkney is home to both grey and common seals. Local population numbers are believed to be changing but little is known about the drivers behind this.

Whilst the body of work relating to anthropogenic pressures and their impact on marine mammals is growing all the time, in order for effective mitigation techniques to be employed and population recovery to be monitored there needs to be (as an absolute minimum) a basic knowledge of population profiles including their size and biological fitness.

The role of Orkney Marine Mammal Research Initiative is to undertake the necessary long term research within Orkney to gain robust data and understand the position of cetaceans and pinnipeds utilising Orkney waters.

BUSINESS AND SWOT ANALYSIS

No other organisations are actively studying marine mammals within Orkney or offering similar services to those planned by OMMRI. However, a number of similar organisations exist outwith Orkney and appear to be thriving. These include those based locally (for example, Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust), UK wide (Sea Watch Foundation) and at international (Whale and Dolphin Conservation) levels. OMMRI is keen to establish working partnerships with these agencies and aims to contribute robust research to their individual efforts, thereby helping to create a wider picture of marine mammals both around the UK and further afield.

For Orkney, OMMRI will aim to fulfil the identified niche for a local organisation to advance science and conservation, as it relates to marine mammals, within its own waters.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Passionate Trustees ◆ Clear purpose ◆ Clear need for organisation ◆ Good skills base amongst Trustees ◆ Contacts with national organisations ◆ Commitment to quality ◆ Experience of working within a similar organisation and running surveys/outreach programmes 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Small board ◆ Limited resources ◆ No confirmed income sources ◆ Lack of brand awareness ◆ Competing demands on Trustees time – lack of staff to deliver objectives ◆ Forward planning is not yet clear ◆ Passion could lead to taking on too much too soon
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ We have a boat ◆ Growing public interest in cetaceans which can be mobilised to assist with research ◆ Affluent tourism in region ◆ Contacts with local media ◆ No organisation undertaking similar work in region ◆ Social media platforms ◆ Ferry service that could provide free access to undertake transect surveys 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Orkney is a small community, any negative attention can have a big impact ◆ Potential lack of enthusiasm from local community ◆ Potential to be overwhelmed by work ◆ Conflict over ideas could become 'personal' if not viewed objectively ◆ Covid-19 restrictions – short term uncertainty ◆ Other NGOs looking to expand into the region

AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES TO 2024

When used properly, vision and mission statements guide all of the day-to-day activities of an organisation.

Our vision that

“decision makers, researchers, local organisations and the general public have an awareness and knowledge of marine mammals in Orkney waters and a desire to work together to protect them”.

drives our mission of

“working to protect marine mammals in Orkney through research and education”.

Our mission is at the core of OMMRI; not only does it shape our culture but it sets the direction for all our activities. No organisation can do everything but our mission statement will ensure that we all set off from a similar place with the same end-goal (or vision) in mind. We have therefore identified four aims (or work streams) that will guide us. These are to:

- ◆ Use citizen science and education to encourage members of the community to become ‘Stewards of the Sea’
- ◆ Actively undertake research
- ◆ Use an evidence based approach to help protect Orkney’s marine mammals
- ◆ Secure long-term funding to ensure the continuation of research

We strongly believe that by aligning our activities to these aims and, in turn, continuing to actively focus upon our vision and mission, we can be confident that we will be efficiently and passionately working towards achieving our charitable objectives.

However, whilst we have passion and drive, as a new organisation with no long term funding in place at present we must also be conscious of ensuring the organisation is not stretched too thinly. The outline short, medium and long-term activities plans below identify which activities will be focussed upon and when.

Many of these activities will be ongoing once they commence so are reliant not just upon securing funding but also upon securing the people required for delivering them. Activities that require staff (as opposed to solely volunteer) support for delivery are identified by an asterix (*).

Activities Plans

Short term (Years 1- 2)	
<p>Stewards of the Sea</p> <p>Citizen science programme (yr1)</p> <p>Citizen science training workshops (yr1)</p> <p>Orkney’s marine mammals leaflets (yr1/2)</p> <p>Education and outreach visits (yr2)</p> <p>Practical conservation tasks, e.g. beach cleans and promotion of ghost net clearing (SEA/ghost fishing) (yr2)</p>	<p>Actively undertaking research</p> <p>Land based effort surveys (yr1)</p> <p>Casual sightings data collated (yr1)</p> <p>Transect surveys on ferries (yr1)</p> <p>Transect surveys on boats (yr1/2)</p>
<p>An evidence based approach to protection</p> <p>Promotion of WISE scheme (yr1)</p> <p>Photographic ID catalogues (yr1)</p>	<p>Securing long term funding</p> <p>Sale of merchandise (yr1)</p> <p>Fundraising activities (yr1)</p> <p>Submit grant applications (yr1)</p> <p>Supporters scheme (yr1)</p> <p>Develop brand - particularly online (yr1/2)</p> <p>Corporate sponsorship (yr2)</p> <p>Sponsor a species/individual animal (yr2)</p>

Medium term (Years 3 – 4)	
Stewards of the Sea Cetacean Atlas for Orkney online (yr3) Whale track/trail app launched (yr3) Wildlife officers on ferry routes (yr4)*	Actively undertaking research Develop specific add-on projects to our core work (yr3)
An evidence based approach to protection Conference presentations (yr3) Data provision (yr4)*	Securing long term funding Increase brand awareness (yr3) Staff employed (yr3) Secure core funding (yr4)

Long term (Year 5 onwards)	
Stewards of the Sea Start to develop a discovery centre * Work with Orkney Museums Service to develop a whaling exhibition or display Cetacean Atlas – Hardback book (yr15/16)	Actively undertaking research Academic partnerships * Internships
An evidence based approach to protection Publishing of papers Measurable reduction in anthropogenic impacts	Securing long term funding Wildlife watching trips *

MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION

Orkney Marine Mammal Research Initiative is governed by a small but dedicated Trustee Board, made up of 3 volunteers from the local community:

Karen Hetherington (Chair)

Emma Neave-Webb (Treasurer)

Imogen Sawyer (Secretary)

Whilst the Trustee team is small, the Trustees come from a variety of backgrounds and bring a wealth of experience and skills to the board. The constitution allows for a maximum of 6 Trustees and additional Trustees will be appointed over the coming years, with the intention that this will happen organically. This will ensure the board operates effectively and allow for succession planning.

The organisation will not have employees at the outset but it is hoped that staff can be appointed in due course, once the organisation is operating and has secured appropriate external funding to support this. These staffing needs are identified within the 'aims, objectives and activities' section of this document by an asterix (*).

FINANCIALS

As a start-up, we do not yet have a confirmed income. The figures below are projections based on assumptions that the board of Trustees feel are realistic.

Grant Income

Competition for grants are always high and a success rate of around 30% is anticipated. The list below includes some of the funders that we plan to approach over the coming months.

Scottish Natural Heritage	Whale and Dolphin Conservation
The Robertson Trust	Heritage Lottery Fund
Scottish Wildlife Trust	Postcode Local Trust

We hope to secure approximately £5,000 in grant funding over the first 12 months.

Supporters scheme

A supporters scheme will be launched during the first year of operation. Due to this, an income in the region of £600 is anticipated in the first 12 months.

Training courses

The ability to deliver training courses will be dictated by physical distancing regulations. If the route out of lockdown continues as hoped, a small number of training courses could be run this year. It is anticipated that public talks and events will otherwise be on hold for the near future. Potential income: £100

One-off donations

One off donations are expected to be fairly minimal in the first year after the organisation launches, due to low brand awareness and Covid-19. Income is conservatively estimated at £50.

Sales

Sales of merchandise will form a small but important source of income. It is anticipated that this may be more appealing to those living outwith Orkney. Due to this, Covid-19 will have a substantially negative impact in our first 12 months. It is anticipated that sales will increase in later years. A conservative estimate of £200 of sales is considered realistic. This would realise an income (after costs) of approximately £50.

Donations in Kind

Donations in kind are as important to OMMRI as other forms of income. The current economic climate has reduced disposal incomes but the will to support organisations such as ours has not diminished. Donations in kind will allow work to be achieved when funds are at their scarcest. The value of these is estimated at £250

Incoming

Grants	£5 000
Supporters Scheme	£ 600
Training courses	£ 100
One-off donations	£ 50
Sales	£ 200
Donations in kind	<u>£ 250</u>
Total incoming	<u>£6 200</u>

Outgoing

Supporters scheme costs	£ 100
Training courses costs	£ 40
Sales costs	£ 190
Survey and associated costs	<u>£5 000</u>
Total outgoing	<u>£5 330</u>
Total carried forward	£ 870