

Orkney Marine Mammal Research Initiative

(OMMRI)

Trustees' Annual Report

6th April 2021 to 5th April 2022



Trustees' Annual Report

The trustees have pleasure in presenting their report together with the financial statements for the year ended 5 April 2022.

Reference and Administrative Information

Orkney Marine Mammal Research Initiative, Little Isegarth, Sanday, Orkney KW17 2BL

Scottish Charity Number: SC050461



hello@ommri.org



www.ommri.org



www.facebook.com/Orkneymmri

Charity Trustees

Our Trustees for the period were:

1. Karen Hetherington, Chair
2. Emma Neave-Webb, Secretary
3. Imogen Sawyer, Treasurer

Trustees approving this Annual Report are:

1. Karen Hetherington, Chair
2. Emma Neave-Webb, Secretary
3. Imogen Sawyer, Treasurer
4. Tom Hadley - appointed 13th April 2022
5. Russell Neave - appointed 13th December 2022

Foreword by the Chair

Reflections on OMMRI's second year as a registered charity.

It has to be said that our second year, as an organisation run entirely by volunteers with no paid staff, has faced some challenges. Orkney has a wealth of marine life and there are many areas of its environment that need serious further research and protection. As a fledgling charity with limited finances, and only 24 hours in each day, the OMMRI Trustees have found it difficult at times to choose and focus on realistic goals. As passionate and dedicated individuals we have had to learn to rein in some of our ambitions and learn to walk before we try to run. Towards the end of this reporting period, we undertook recruitment for additional Trustees to the board which will relieve the pressure and enable us to spread the workload more evenly. As a result, we have reached the end of this period with a deeper understanding of, and solid connections within, our local community.

We are proud of what we have achieved so far and by far our proudest moment during this period was the publication of Orkney's first ever Cetacean Sightings Atlas. One of OMMRI's biggest goals has always been to record scientifically the presence and numbers of the huge variety of marine mammals using the sea around our islands and enable the huge gap in published data for Orkney to be filled.



Karen Hetherington

Chair of Trustees

Objectives and Activities

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 a locally based organisation, Orkney Marine Mammal Research Initiative works to protect marine mammals in Orkney through research and education. Our vision is 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. The organisation's purposes/objectives, as set out in our governing document are:

1. 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.
2. The promotion of heritage, arts and culture, through the themes of marine mammals, the marine environment and conservation.
3. 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.
4. The advancement of marine mammal welfare through research and education.
5. The advancement of education and research relating to marine mammals and the marine environment, including citizen science programmes, community engagement, school outreach programmes and volunteering opportunities within Orkney.
6. Any other purpose that may be reasonably regarded as analogous to any of the preceding purposes.

Our work during this period is most easily broken down into four areas: Education and outreach, conservation and environmental protection work, building collaborations with key organisations and implementing good governance and other background work to ensure the charity operates smoothly.

Education and Outreach

Developed during OMMRI's first few months as an organisation, the first 'Stewards of the Sea' citizen science training workshop was delivered on 6th April 2021. Because of the restrictions on travel and group sizes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this training programme took the form of virtual workshops via an online platform. We soon realised that although online delivery was less than ideal in terms of practical workshops, attendance by residents of some of the outer isles was much higher than it would have been had they had to travel to mainland Orkney. As of 5th April 2022, OMMRI has 72 trained volunteers surveying from the coastline around Orkney (Objectives 1 and 5)

On Saturday 4th September 2021, OMMRI hosted a Wildlife Cruise to celebrate its first year as a registered charity. We used this as a platform to introduce a small group to the variety

of marine wildlife using the waters around Orkney and as an opportunity to promote the Marine Wildlife Watching Vessel Code of Conduct.

OMMRI's Cetacean Sightings Atlas for 2020 was published on 8th October 2021. The first edition provides a visual overview of the data collected and verified over one year. Collated from literally hundreds of reports, contributed by Orkney's communities, the data in this report represents the beginning of our understanding of cetacean behaviour and distribution around Orkney and provides an insight into the movements of these animals. Alongside the facts and figures the atlas includes photographs from local contributors. This Sightings Atlas represents the first of what will be many years of gathering evidence and OMMRI is indebted to everyone in the local community who has supported us and reported their sightings. By 5th April 2022, OMMRI had sold and distributed a total of 300 copies of its inaugural Atlas.

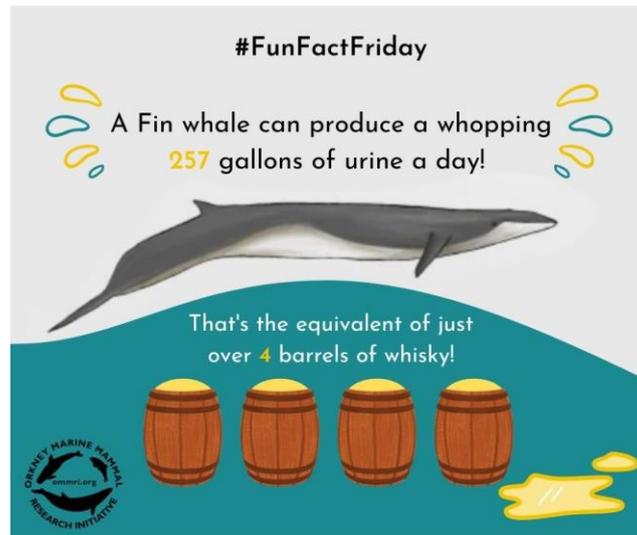
In November 2021, with funding from Sea-Changers, we launched our Borrow our Binoculars scheme. Thanks to Historic Environment Scotland (HES), OMMRI is now able to offer members of the public the opportunity to book (free of charge) a pair of binoculars via the OMMRI website. These can be collected and returned at the admissions desk at HES Skara Brae Visitor Centre. As well as offering the community the opportunity to get a closer look at Orkney's marine mammals, users of the service are also encouraged to report their sightings to OMMRI and help to provide evidence of species presence throughout Orkney waters. (Objectives 1, 3, 4 & 5)



Borrow Our Borrow Our Binoculars Facebook post @OMMRI

Finally, social media. During the last reporting period, OMMRI had launched a sightings alerts group using WhatsApp. As well as being invaluable as a tool for collecting casual sightings data this proved so popular with users wanting access to sightings information in real time that, by September 2021, the group was so oversubscribed that the platform was changed to Telegram. With now over 650 users OMMRI continues to manage this resource which has engaged both locals and visitors to the islands. (Objectives 1, 3 and 5)

Our Facebook page continues to grow, and we regularly post informative content under the hashtags 'Fun Fact Friday' and 'Science Saturday'. These are usually light-hearted but contain factual, educational information and have proved popular with our followers. As of 5th April 2022, the number of people liking our Facebook page has reached 3099 having grown from 2181 on 6th April 2021. This reach has been totally organic with no posts paid for and our most popular post reached 15,668 people on 8th September 2021.



Fun Fact Friday Facebook post ©OMMRI

Conservation and Environmental Protection

OMMRI aims to encourage a culture of stewardship that utilises an evidence-based approach to protect Orkney's marine mammals. As part of this, we comment and provide feedback - both positive and negative - on matters of local and national significance that impact upon Orkney waters and its inhabitants.

On 1st April 2021 OMMRI received a request from Marine Scotland for opinion on the Scot Gov scoping report for the development of the West of Orkney Windfarm. We were gratified to be considered 'key consultees' for this project and our opinions were submitted by the deadline of 2nd May 2022. (Objective 1, 3 & 6)

On 24th February 2022, OMMRI responded to the planning application for a proposed new fish farm off the coastline of Papa Westray, one of Orkney's north isles. We had been approached for help in this matter by residents concerned by the effects such a development might have on the nearby grey seal protected area and water quality. Our objections were backed up with robust evidence against the proposal. (Objectives 1, 3 & 6)

The ability to respond to consultations such as these requires an up to date and accurate body of evidence. Increased reporting and stringent verification of the number of casual marine mammal sightings submitted to OMMRI by the community, together with the numbers recorded during survey effort, have seen total numbers of sightings more than double from a total of 452 sightings in 2020. (Objectives 1, 3 and 5)

Collaborations with other NGOs and Organisations

Working alongside like-minded organisations is vital if we are going to protect and conserve the sea around Orkney, the mammals that call it home and the people that rely on it for a living. OMMRI has produced a Data Sharing Agreement which allows us to collaborate effectively with both local and national organisations.

In May 2021 OMMRI's Science and Data Officer was asked to act as Regional Sightings Coordinator for Sea Watch Foundation (SWF). This national organisation runs two annual week-long 'citizen science' programmes - Orca Watch and 'National Whale and Dolphin Watch' - aiming to gather cetacean numbers around the UK. As most participants of this event have no training in cetacean ID it is important that data collected during these snapshot periods is verified in order to be taken seriously.

In early September 2021, sadly one of the known killer whales (*Orcinus orca*) from the Northern Isles Community was found stranded in Papa Westray. OMMRI worked very closely with colleagues from Scottish Marine Animal Strandings Scheme to secure the carcass, arrange local permissions and assist on the day so that a full necropsy could take place. Sadly, #151 - a young male from the 27s pod - was found to have become entangled in active or ghost fishing gear and drowned and OMMRI worked closely with the local naturalist community to pull together a probable timeline of events including the final confirmed live sighting of #151.



Deceased killer whale in Papa Westray ©Scottish Marine Animal Strandings Scheme

October 2021 saw OMMRI joining forces with PhD student Emily Hague from Heriot Watt University to collaborate with the Scottish Vessel Project. This project aims to document accurately the true number of vessels working in the seas around Scotland. As well as recruiting our survey volunteers to watch for vessels whilst surveying for cetaceans our Science and Data Officer now has a dedicated AIS receiver collecting information for the Scottish Vessel Project. (Objectives 1, 3, 4 & 5)



Location: What3Words/Grid Ref: **Date:** Observer(s):
Visibility: Sea State: **Time vessel watch started:** **Time vessel watch ended:**
Estimate of number of creel markers (e.g. buoys) visible from watch site:
 Please send completed forms to: OMMRI, Bessingpath, Sandau, KW11 2BW or scan and email to sightings@ommri.org and info@ommri.org
 For more information on how vessel watches are contributing to OMMRI, and on the Scottish Vessel Project itself, see <https://bit.ly/ScottishVesselProject>

Vessel information <small>Use one row per vessel, recording when you first spot it, when it leaves your view, and its behaviour during that time. Note: vessels includes jet skis, kayakers, paddleboarders etc.</small>								Marine mammal sighting <small>Note: if you witness disturbance that concerns you, please report this to the police on 101!</small>			
Time		Vessel type <small>See boat codes sheet e.g. SV for sailing vessel</small>	Vessel name <small>(if known) MoloTraffic is a helpful app for identifying vessels that are transmitting their location – if you use the app please note whether the vessel was visible on there</small>	Bearing ° <small>(use clock or compass)</small>		Distance from observer <small>(m)</small>		Speed And Vessel activity and behaviour <small>Circle all that apply and add extra notes, if required</small>	Vessel sighted at the same time as marine mammals Yes or No Species?	Was there an interaction with the vessel Yes or No Was this initiated by the vessel or the animals? <small>e.g. animals went to boat, or, boat went to animals</small>	Did the marine mammals behaviour change? Yes or No How? <small>e.g. bow-ride, changed direction, longer dives, no reaction</small>
first seen	last seen			when first seen	when last seen	when first seen	when last seen				
							Speed Still Low Medium High Activity/behaviour Moving Idle Erratic Anchored Fishing – creels, trawling, line Other (add more info)				
							Speed Still Low Medium High Activity/behaviour Moving Idle Erratic Anchored Fishing – creels, trawling, line Other (add more info)				
							Speed Still Low Medium High Activity/behaviour Moving Idle Erratic Anchored Fishing – creels, trawling, line Other (add more info)				

Vessel Project data collection form ©OMMRI

Fundraising

Funds have been raised in a variety of ways during this reporting period. It must be said that as we moved slowly out of the effects of Covid 19, and like many other NGOs, finding funding during this period was difficult. However, we were fortunate to receive funding from Sea-Changers which enabled us to launch our Borrow Our Binoculars scheme as well as financing the first print run of the Cetacean Sightings Atlas for 2020. This was printed by a local print centre.

Our website shops continue to grow and have provided us with a trickle of income from both locally sourced merchandise and sales of the Cetacean Sightings Atlas and Christmas cards. Lifestyle giving also continues to provide a small but regular income.

Governance, Structure and Management

OMMRI is a single tier SCIO and is governed by a constitution. OMMRI has the following policies and procedures in place:

Complaints, Confidentiality, Conflict of Interest, Data Sharing, Environmental, Equality, Financial Management, Health and Safety plus Safeguarding.

These documents are easily accessible by volunteers and potential donors on our website www.ommri.org/about/documents. Additionally, we use a Volunteer Agreement form to ensure that all volunteers are following a Code of Conduct and are covered by our volunteer insurance policy. (Objective 6)

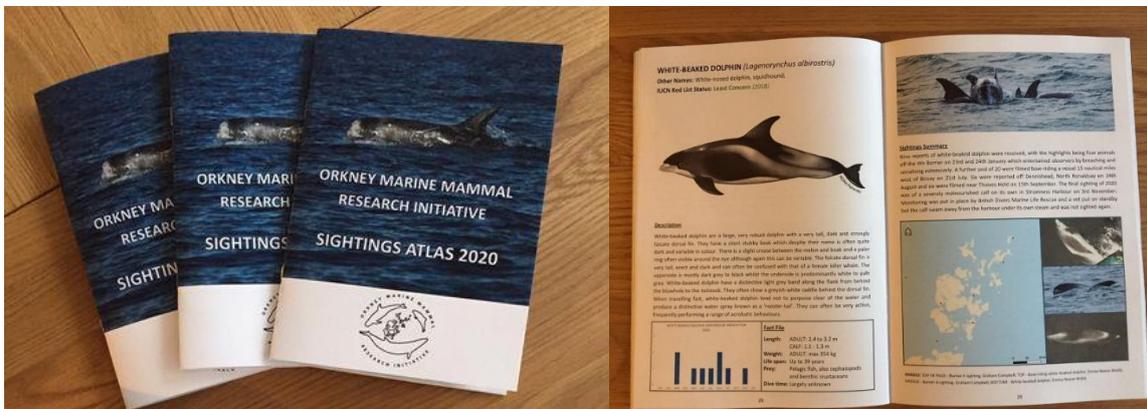
Trustee Recruitment and Appointment

OMMRI believes that the organisation is best served by a diverse board with a mix of skills and experience. Trustee recruitment was therefore undertaken towards the end of the financial year, with the volunteer roles advertised via Facebook, on the OMMRI website and through word of mouth. Potential applicants were provided with a comprehensive role description, person specification and application form, as well as information on the legal ramifications of becoming a Trustee, the reasons for disqualification and a copy of OSCR's 'Guidance and Good Practice for Charity Trustees'. Two applications were received, and appointments made in the next reporting period.

No external organisation is entitled to appoint Trustees to the OMMRI board.

Achievements and Performance

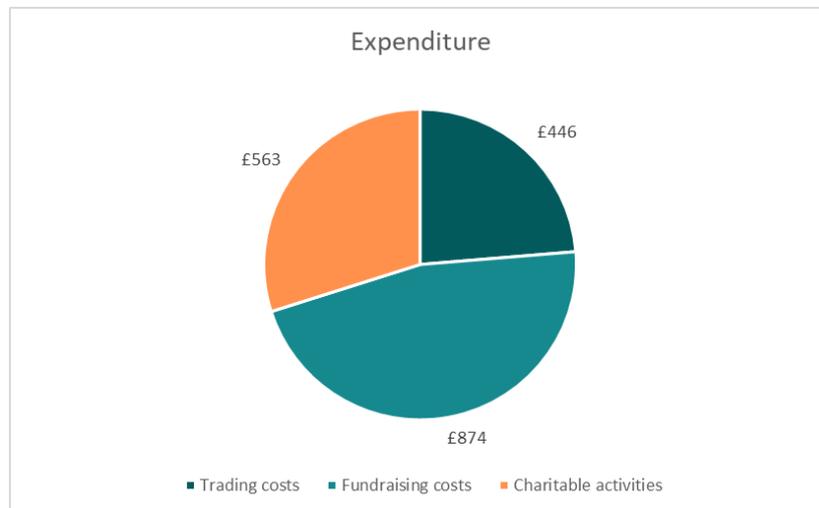
- Producing Orkney's first ever Cetacean Sightings Atlas
- Continuing to grow and manage our Stewards of the Sea citizen science programme
- Responding to consultations using an evidence-based approach to back our position
- Working collaboratively with both local and national organisations to ensure that the position of Orkney's marine mammals is represented and understood
- Fostering a sense of stewardship for the marine environment within the local community



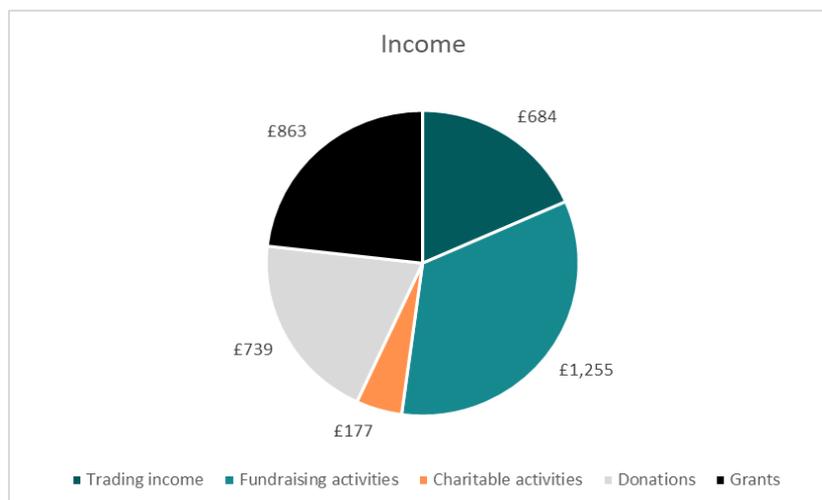
OMMRI Sightings Atlas 2020 ©OMMRI

Financial Review

The Trustees have continued with a conservative approach to expenditure throughout the period. Spending therefore focused upon essentials such as insurance for the organisation and its volunteers, zoom fees for online training and meetings, operating the marine cruise (which raised awareness and operated at a small profit) plus the cost of goods for trading.



Unrestricted income received was predominantly from donations and sale of goods. Unrestricted income is incredibly important to OMMRI, allowing us to spend money in a way that best suits the aims of the organisation and the communities we serve, helping to cover essential core costs such as insurance.



Restricted grant funding was received from Sea-Changers to assist with the costs of offering Stewards of the Sea training as well as the purchase of binoculars the cost of producing materials such as the 2020 Sightings Atlas. Not all of this money was spent in the current period and the balance was carried forward.

Policy on Reserves

The Trustee board considers reserves equivalent to three months operating costs to be prudent. However, it is recognised by the Trustees that, as a relatively new organisation, it will take time to build reserves to this level.

During this period, with no employees or premises, there were no ongoing operating costs.

Details of any Deficit

Orkney Marine Mammal Research Initiative has not incurred a deficit.

Donated Facilities and Services

OMMRI's Trustees have donated basic materials such as stationery. OMMRI has also benefited from photographs and images donated by supporters for use in our work, as well as a meeting space donated for use by Orkney Native Wildlife Project.

Summary of Accounts

Orkney Marine Mammal Research Initiative (OMMRI)							
SC050461							
Receipts and payments accounts							
For the period from	Period start date			to	Period end date		
	Day	Month	Year		Day	Month	Year
	06	04	2021		05	04	2022
Section A Statement of receipts and payments							
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Expendable endowment funds	Permanent endowment funds	Total funds current period	Total funds last period	
	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £	
A1 Receipts							
Donations	739	-	-	-	739	310	
Legacies	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Grants	-	863	-	-	863	-	
Receipts from fundraising activities	1,255	-	-	-	1,255	-	
Gross trading receipts	684	-	-	-	684	135	
Income from investments other than land and buildings	1	-	-	-	1	-	
Rents from land & buildings	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Gross receipts from other charitable activities	177	-	-	-	177	-	
A1 Sub total	2,856	863	-	-	3,719	445	
A2 Receipts from asset & investment sales							
Proceeds from sale of fixed assets	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Proceeds from sale of investments	-	-	-	-	-	-	
A2 Sub total	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total receipts	2,856	863	-	-	3,719	445	
A3 Payments							
Expenses for fundraising activities	874	-	-	-	874	-	
Gross trading payments	446	177	-	-	623	32	
Investment management costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Payments relating directly to charitable activities	563	298	-	-	861	14	
Grants and donations	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Governance costs:							
Audit / independent examination	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Preparation of annual accounts	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Legal costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	
A3 Sub total	1,883	475	-	-	2,358	46	
A4 Payments relating to asset and investment movements							
Purchases of fixed assets	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Purchase of investments	-	-	-	-	-	-	
A4 Sub total	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total payments	1,883	475	-	-	2,358	46	
Net receipts / (payments)	973	388	-	-	1,361	399	
A5 Transfers to / (from) funds							
	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Surplus / (deficit) for year	973	388	-	-	1,361	399	

Full accounts are available via our website: www.ommri.org

Declaration

Signed on behalf of the charity Trustees:



Print name

Karen Hetherington

Designation

Chair

Date

5th January 2023