



Berwickshire Marine Reserve Pilot Lobster Hatchery & Marine Education Centre Progress Report



**Project delivered by Berwickshire Marine Reserve
In Partnership with the St Abbs Marine Station, DR Collins and
supported by the Scottish Borders Council**

Report compiled by Alice Fisher, February 2022 (Updated March 2022)



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot



Executive Summary

In November 2021, the Berwickshire Marine Reserve secured funding with the Scottish Government Local Area Group (LAG) Fund to pilot a Lobster Hatchery and Marine Education Centre in partnership with DR Collins and the St Abbs Marine Station.

To date, this project has been an overwhelming success - we opened the doors in January and have already welcomed over 640 visitors to our Project.

We have recently been awarded Platinum Jubilee funding from the National Lottery Community Fund Scotland . This funding will enable us to continue the project from March to September - covering rental and staff costs to ensure we can build upon what's already been developed and provide an interactive and educational facility in Eyemouth over the summer period. We are now gearing up to open the doors again over the Easter holidays and into the summer months!



Summary of Outcomes

- To date, 642 visitors have participated in our project
- That includes, 2 school groups, 5 nursery groups and 4 community groups with more community groups booked in.
- We have recruited 11 new volunteers so far.
- Increased engagement with local creel fishermen - raising awareness of the importance of sustainable fishing practices.

'What a wonderful interactive and educational facility for Eyemouth'
Parent at Coldingham Primary School, January 2022.

Background

This year we aim to build upon existing research undertaken at the BMR, as well as supporting the local creel fishing community by piloting a new community Lobster Hatchery. In November 2021, the BMR secured funding from the Scottish Government Local Action Group (LAG) fund to develop a new community lobster hatchery in Eyemouth.

Working in partnership with the St Abbs Marine Station and local shellfish merchant, DR Collins and local fishermen to establish a lobster hatchery and release programme - gaining a better understanding of the creel fishing industry whilst helping contribute to our goal of supporting and improving our changing ecosystems.



Aim: To raise awareness of the Berwickshire Marine Reserve, the important species found here whilst working directly with the local fishery to promote responsible and sustainable use.

The hatchery will raise awareness of lobsters, the local creel industry and sustainable fisheries - sharing knowledge through education, so we can raise awareness of the vulnerability of our fisheries and of the many positive ways in which we, as consumers, can help to ensure sustainable stock levels.

Primary Objective

The project aims to engage the local community and users of the Berwickshire Marine Reserve (schools, community groups, recreational divers, local fishermen and fish merchants). To raise their awareness of pressures the Marine Reserve faces, how sustainable fishing practices can reduce this impact and how the hatchery can help to boost stock levels.

Main Aims:

- 1) Engage the local and visiting community through the lobster release programme and educational visits
- 2) Collaborate with local fish merchants and Creel fishermen on sustainable fishing
- 3) Increase lobster population/stock level within Berwickshire Marine Reserve

Measurable Outcomes:

The impact of this project will be monitored by:

- Number of volunteers engaged
- Number of school/university visits
- Number of hatchery visitors



- Percentage of eggs that survive to pre-release juvenile phase

Community Engagement



In addition to the positive environmental impact on the depleted lobster stock populations in the BMR, this project also engages multiple community and user groups. We currently work with the following user groups:

- Creel Fishermen
- Local and visiting divers
- Schools and nursery groups
- University students

The BMR provides training, open days and volunteering opportunities to get involved in the following:

- Feeding lobster larvae, juveniles, broodstock, and aquarium exhibits
- Assisting with the husbandry of brood stock
- Cleaning tanks
- Maintaining and enhancing recirculating aquaculture systems and aquarium displays
- Water quality/chemistry monitoring
- The releasing of juvenile lobsters back into the sea



Educational visits expand the boundaries of the classroom, linking the curriculum to enhanced learning objectives, and allowing children to participate with applied marine conservation in action.

Lobsters go through distinct growing cycle stages whilst with us and as they are marine invertebrates moult their exoskeleton as they grow and become bigger.

Each area of the Hatchery is dedicated to a part of the process of producing a juvenile lobster from an egg for release back into the sea as we hatch, rear and release. This includes the lifecycle phase of reared lobster eggs, as well as mortality rates and the daily monitoring of lobster health.



As well as seeing first hand the fascinating progression of a lobster from egg to adult and learning about our own conservation and research work, children can learn about the wider marine environment and why we should protect it.

Future Activity

This project will help us bridge the gap between our understanding and awareness of our declining fishing industry with the community and visiting divers and users of the Berwickshire Marine Reserve.

Learnings from this pilot can also lead to long term monitoring consisting of fishermen questionnaires to report on local landings, changes in CPUE and monitoring the average landing sizes of berried hens.

BMR staff will be responsible for public engagement of volunteers, organising training events, collaborating with the local fishing fleet and outreach events educating on the project.

Through the restocking of juveniles and the establishment of a education-focused hatchery we will meet our organisational goals of conserving the BMR, raising awareness and working directly with the local fishery to promote responsible and sustainable use. Additionally, we will be able to boost our visual presence in Eyemouth and the promotion of Berwickshire as a Green Tourism Destination.



Project Governance

The Hatchery opened to the public on January 15th 2022. Based in Eyemouth Hippodrome on Harbour Road we are in a central location for hosting school groups and visitors to the hatchery weekly.



The project is led by the Volunteer and Governance Manager working closely with our two Project Officers who will deliver all community outreach and lobster husbandry. Support in the running of the aquaria will be received from the St Abbs Marine Station and DR Collins.

The Berwickshire Marine Reserve is fortunate to operate with the support of many local and visiting volunteers, and this project has already recruited a team of local volunteers to help with the husbandry of the lobsters and this summer two voluntary Marine Rangers will again be recruited to help deliver our programme of events and help run a programme of

community events and supports our essential marine monitoring data collection surveys.

Finance and Funding

Our project had funding for a pilot secured from the Scottish Government until March 2022 and has been awarded further funding from The National Lottery to continue on.

The Lobster Hatchery is currently being housed within Eyemouth Hippodrome on Harbour Road. Should future funding be successful we have been encouraged by Eyemouth Harbour Trust to develop the hatchery within the new Eyemouth Harbour Fishmarket development.

Generating unrestricted income has always been a challenge for the organisation, with much time and capacity ring fenced for our fundraising efforts to ensure the sustainability of the charity.

To ensure the sustainability of this project, we are proposing a £2 voluntary donation on entry to all visitors to the Lobster Hatchery and Marine Education Centre - this could be subsidised by additional grant funding and income generated from merchandise sales and our Adopt a Lobster campaign.

Future Legacy

This hatchery will be interactive, informative, and engaging for members of the community of all ages. Both children (and brave adults) can get hands-on experience with touch tanks where our hatchery guides can introduce you to some local creatures. Visitors can observe the whole process from the eggs hatching to the young lobsters being ready for release.

This project raises awareness of the marine environment, the local creel industry and sustainable fisheries - sharing knowledge through education, so we can raise awareness of the vulnerability of our fisheries and of the many positive ways in which we, as consumers, can help to ensure sustainable stock levels.

Your support will create a lasting impact on the conservation of Berwickshire Marine Reserve.

