

Sammy the celebrity salmon

Stockport to Liverpool

Date: June 2007

Background:

The Mersey Basin Campaign (MBC) wanted to generate publicity by means of an awareness raising event celebrating the achievements of the Campaign for World Environment Day. The main objectives were to gain local and regional media coverage and to involve people on their local stretch of river.

The project:



The idea was to hold a relay event where a baton would set off from the start of the River Mersey in Stockport and be carried by various groups using different modes of transport to the other end of the river, Liverpool's Pier Head.

The story that was used as the media 'hook' was the return of salmon to the River Mersey for the first time since the Industrial Revolution. For that reason, a carved wooden salmon was specially crafted to be the baton and christened Sammy the Salmon.

How we did it:

The relay route was divided into sections and different activity groups were recruited to transport Sammy through their patch:

- Stockport to Sale Water Park – Stockport Community Cycling Club
- Sale Water Park to Carrington Recreation Ground – Manchester Canoe Club
- Manchester Ship Canal, Salford Quays to Latchford Locks – by Mersey Ferry.
- Woolston weir to Howley weir – Warrington Rowing Club
- Howley weir to Fidlers Ferry Sailing Club – North & Mid Cheshire Ramblers Association
- Fidlers Ferry Sailing Club, Penketh, to Liverpool Sailing Club, Speke and Garston – sailing yacht, Fidlers Ferry Sailing Club
- Liverpool Sailing Club to the Albert Dock – power boat, Liverpool Sailing Club and Merseyside Youth Challenge Trust

The Mayor of Stockport attended the start of the relay and the Lord Mayor of Liverpool attended the finish.

Members of Mersey Basin Campaign staff attended each stage, and photographed and blogged the occasion.

Publicity:

Publicity for the project was managed by a placement student from the University of Chester's journalism programme (with guidance from MBC staff). This worked particularly well, as she gained great satisfaction from seeing a project through from inception to completion during her placement, and was able to focus solely on the Baton Relay event as it unfolded.

Press releases were distributed to local and regional press and television. Posters were displayed in relevant locations – and the event was publicised through the activity groups involved, as well as partner organisations.

In addition, the relay was covered extensively on the Mersey Basin Campaign's blog, with staff members writing up each day's journey in the 'voice' of Sammy the Salmon, as well as posting photographs from the journey. Clare, our student intern, and Kate, our new media manager, also recorded short audio interviews with some of the participants and added these to the blog. Having such regular updates meant an upsurge in visitors to the Campaign blog, and being able to write as Sammy also encouraged some staff who had been reluctant before to engage with the blog.

The event received 17 items of local newspaper coverage, as well as regional coverage in the Liverpool Daily Post and the Manchester Evening News. The story was also featured on Granada Reports on ITV Granada, with Fred 'The

Weatherman' Talbot joining Sammy for part of his journey, and reporting on the water quality improvements that has led to salmon returning to the Mersey.

Project value and funding sources:

The project value was £23,030 and this came from the Mersey Basin Campaign's Aquatic Litter Advisory Group grant.

Who was involved:

Community Support Coordinator – coordinated the contacting of the groups, organised transport and carried out risk assessments at 7 sites. This was facilitated by the wider team (9 staff) who helped out with identifying groups and planning out the various stages.

Communications Manager – planned and oversaw the publicity that was implemented by our student intern.

Communications Student Intern – managed publicity and press coverage with support from the Communications Manager.

New Media Manager – set up and managed the project blog, coordinated and edited audio recordings with participating groups.

The Environment Agency was a partner in the project and were interviewed on location for Granada Reports.

The activity groups who took part were:

[Stockport Community Cycling Club](#) (Jim Court)

[Canoe England](#) and [Manchester Canoe Club](#) (Chris Cleaver)

[Warrington Rowing Club](#) (Richard Sinnot)

[Mersey Ferries](#)

[The Ramblers](#) – **North and Mid Cheshire group** (Bill Fraser)

[Fiddlers Ferry Sailing Club](#) (Colin Howard)

[Liverpool Sailing Club](#) (Tom Workman)

[Merseyside Youth Challenge Trust](#)

Lessons Learned:

This was a high-risk strategy that paid off, attracting great media coverage. The project captured people's imagination and was popular with the groups, who gave up their free time. The project took a large amount of time to organise and the extra help of the student looking after publicity was essential.