

My Tamar Festival

Cotehele Quay, Cornwall, Saturday 10th October 2015

Background

The WaterLIFE project, EC LIFE+ funded, is working towards healthy rivers for people and nature by bringing together communities, business and government. The project focuses on accelerating delivery of the Water Framework Directive in five catchments across England and Wales initially.

Over the summer, Westcountry Rivers Trust, as part of the WaterLIFE project, hit the road on a summer tour to explore current feeling about what communities (schools, businesses and individuals) living in the Tamar catchment thought about their water environment. People living and working in the Tamar catchment were invited to share their photos and stories about what the river meant to them and to create their own artwork inspired by the river and local environment.

Flyers and posters for the My Tamar engagement tour



The tour aimed to unite people living and working in the Tamar catchment, raising awareness about the resources the river provides and the health of freshwater ecosystems. As well as raising awareness, the tour also aimed to inform and update people on activities delivered through the Tamar Catchment Partnership and the WaterLIFE project to improve the freshwater environment. Ultimately, awareness and engagement leads to behaviour change, where individuals, businesses and organisations are encouraged to take action and make small changes to make a collective difference to their river.

The summer public engagement tour culminated in the Tamar Festival which was held on the banks of the river at Cotehele Quay in early October.

It is one of a series of WaterLIFE catchment partnership events. Visit www.waterlife.org.uk to read to previous news and reports.

“The Tamar is more than just water. It’s an evolving community of creatures, characters and culture. Together we contribute to the wellbeing of the river. And in turn the river looks after us.”

The Tamar Festival

The Tamar Festival was held on Saturday 10th October 2015 between 11am - 4pm at Cotehele Quay, a National Trust property on the banks of the river. The festival was organised along four key Tamar themes; the environment, arts & heritage, food & produce and recreation. Members of the Tamar Catchment Partnership were invited to showcase projects and activities currently underway to protect and restore the river for future generations. Also on show was an array of local produce, artists and community groups based along the river, and attendees at the festival enjoyed live music, craft workshops, water quality testing demonstrations and a series of River Tamar talks throughout the day.

A selection of photos from the My Tamar Festival



My Tamar Festival poster, detailing the programme of talks, activities and contributors on the day

TAMAR

What's On at the Tamar Festival

- 12:00** Welcome to the Tamar Festival, Nick Paling
- 12:20** Tales from the Banks of the Tamar, Ted Sherrell
- 12:40** As the River Flows, Peter Ursem
- 13:00** History of the Lynher Barge, Barbara Bridgman
- 13:20** Abandoned Mines: Polluters & Habitats, Charly Braungardt
- 13:40** Local Sustainable Food, Simon Platten
- 14:00** Brilliant Fish, Felicity Sylvester

PLUS

- 11.30-1 & 2-3.30** Mosaicking Workshops by Chrissy Wallis
- 11.30-12.15 & 1.30 -2.15** Music from the Tavy Tars

Food & Drink including produce by Tamar Grow Local, Plymouth Tea, Brilliant Fish, Hobbs House, Robyns Farmhouse
Art & Heritage exhibits and talks by Peter Ursem, Chrissy Wallis, Ted Sherrell, Barbara Bridgman, Cremyl Keel-boats, Rame Peninsula Beach Care
Environment & Science activities, talks and exhibits by Westcountry Rivers Trust, Charly Braungardt, Plymouth University, South West Water, WRT River Scientists, Tamar Catchment Partnership, Cornwall Catchment Partnership, Cornwall Wildlife Trust, Devon Wildlife Trust
Recreation & Leisure talks & exhibits by Westcountry Angling Passport, Tamar Valley Ramblers, National Trust, Weir Quay Sailing club, Launceston Anglers, Tamar Trust, Dartmoor National Park, Tamar Valley AONB, Tamar Valley Tourism Association.



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The objectives of the festival were:

- To showcase activities undertaken by the Tamar Catchment Partnership to protect and improve the river
- Raising the general public's awareness of the Tamar and the vital role it plays in their lives
- Attracting new community members, businesses and organisations with which to share information about, and garner support for, the WaterLIFE project and the Tamar Action Plan
- Engaging community members, businesses and organisations in taking action to improve the freshwater environment
- Building relationships with businesses in the catchment, so that we can work with them in the future.

These objectives fit into the wider WaterLIFE aim of building capacity amongst civil society through engagement activities so they are better able to contribute to the management of their water environment.

More information about the campaign is online: my-tamar.org

Participants

Normally, 110-140 would visit the Quay on a Saturday in October; 223 people were counted visiting just one area of the Quay during the festival. It is estimated that approximately 300 to 400 people attended the day altogether. Attendees included people living in the local area, families and representatives of organisations involved in the Tamar Catchment Partnership.

“Thank you for the invite to the Tamar Festival and for allowing me to set up site in the marquee. The location was fabulous and the weather was perfect. I spoke to a lot of people that day and they all went away with some water saving device - whether it be for the home or garden.”
Jackie Pells, South West Water.

Outcomes

WRT's work under the WaterLIFE project has enabled WRT to expand the existing Tamar Partnership and start to engage more widely with people, businesses and organisations in the Tamar catchment that have the capacity to impact the health of freshwater ecosystems. The Tamar Festival was the first public engagement event of this type organised by WRT. Adding a public facing dimension to the partnership has built support

amongst the community and this will allow us to engage further with additional businesses and organisations in the future.

Outcomes of the Tamar Festival include:

- Over 40 new contacts made and added to the Tamar database who will now receive newsletters from us
- Recruitment of our first citizen scientists to help monitoring water quality in the Tamar
- Widespread publicity in local media, including newspapers and magazines, as well as local radio (interviews with BBC Radio Devon, BBC Radio Cornwall and Radio Plymouth)
- Possible recruitment of a BBC Radio Devon presenter as a citizen scientist.

Evaluation and next steps

Overall, the Tamar Festival was considered a big success and feedback on the event was positive. The event was well attended by members of the Tamar Catchment Partnership, members of the public brought water samples from their local river to test for pollutants, we engaged with new businesses in the Tamar catchment and added new contacts to our database for future correspondence.

Next steps

- Send regular newsletters to both our existing and new contacts
- Further develop our citizen science programme and recruit new Tamar citizen scientists, for example through working with the BBC Radio Devon presenter
- Capitalise on the positive publicity and raised awareness to work with businesses in the Tamar catchment and develop a water accreditation scheme

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