

WATER SAFETY

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
Working together for a safer Scotland

Please use this template to provide information on any Water Safety initiatives you are doing within your area. Please provide as much relevant information as possible.

if you require any assistance or support in completing this template please contact Bernadine Blair, Evaluation, Funding and Initiatives Officer:
Bernadine.blair@firescotland.gov.uk

LSO AREA

MELSB

Author and Contact Details (add a contact email or phone number),

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What is the Title of the Initiative?

Scottish Borders Water Safety : River Tweed

Summary

To promote water safety amongst the public within the Scottish Borders. Targeting tourists, visitors and locals who use the rivers, lochs and beaches for any water related activities.

Need for Initiative

As with road safety the more cars on the road the more risk there are of accidents. The same goes for water safety. Wild water swimming, paddleboard and kayaking to name a few have hugely increased in popularity during the pandemic and will likely increase beyond. With more numbers having to holiday at home, popular locations are rivers and lochs within the Scottish Borders.

This year, there was a rise in the number of water safety fatalities across Scotland, and tragically, a local youngster in the Scottish Borders area lost her life after getting into difficulties Kayaking in a local river. SFRS wishes to educate the public that although the water can be enjoyed, there are dangers that need to be understood and considered.

Aims and Objectives

- To interact and get the message across to as many people as possible through either face to face events or via TV, radio and social media.
- SFRS will highlight safety points and give advice with the overarching aim of reducing tragic events witnessed in the summer of 2021
- To reduce avoidable water related deaths & injuries in the Scottish Borders.

Delivery/Activities

- Flyers situated at over 40 locally known areas for swimmers and other water based activities. Giving advice on water safety. Interactions with the public whilst at these locations.
- A water safety event held at the River Tweed in Kelso. Inviting members of the public to come and meet our water rescue teams view, see our equipment and receive water safety advice and take part in question and answer sessions. Water rescue teams performed live rescue scenarios in front of the public whilst highlighting the importance of their actions should they themselves get into difficulty in the water, additionally what they can do to help others. (**This event was reported by ITV Borders and aired on the evenings news**).
- A mother who tragically lost two of her sons in the river in the past few years, unveiled a life belt at the riverside. As part of the water safety event we educated members of the public on how to deploy and use the device. <https://fb.watch/7C0TRQCZ2j/>

Resources (What resources does the project require? Does the project rely on any other resources, such as staff from other organisations or premises owned/managed by other organisations? What social media platforms were used to promote it?)

- Swift water rescue teams from Galashiels and Hawick Fire Stations
- Police Scotland Community action team members
- Scottish Borders Council for crowd barriers
- SFRS CAT members
- Printed flyers by SBC
- Facebook and Twitter were used to promote the events

Partner Agencies (include contact details)

- Police Scotland - Nicholas.Walker@scotland.pnn.police.uk
- Kelso angling association – Roy Adam - 07962152780
- Visit Kelso – Wendy Richardson – 07368234326
- ITV Borders – Jennifer Cordingley
- Radio Borders – 01896 751010
- The Southern Reporter (newspaper) – Morag.kuc@jpmedia.co.uk
- Scottish Borders Council - mark.wilson@scotborders.gov.uk

Successes and Challenges

Successes

- 60-70 people attended the live event on the River Tweed in Kelso. Excellent interaction, taking part in throw bag techniques and listening to what action they can safely take.
- Flyers posted at over 40 swimming and water sport/fishing locations within the Scottish Borders.
- Multiple interactions with members of the public at these locations.
- ITV Borders covered on their Newsround programme which covers over 600,000 people. Around 100,000 with the Scottish Borders area.
- Radio Borders promoting our campaign and Kelso event to over 100,000 listeners

Challenges

- It would have been great to have ran the event during the school holidays. Unfortunately, Covid restrictions did not allow.

Impact/Change/Outcomes (has anything changed because of the project? What impact has the project had on participants, the wider community and your area? Have you produced anything as a result of the project (i.e. reports, guidance etc.)? Were there any unexpected outcomes?)

The feedback from members of the public was very positive. SFRS personnel highlighted the importance of buoyancy aids to a group of 6 stand-up paddle boarders. They told us this was something that they hadn't even thought about and they would purchase them the next day.

Reflections

Working with partners and organising this event has been very timely considering the tragedies that have occurred within water across Scotland this year. Covid and the rise of 'staycations' together with changes in weather (Scotland has had a fairly good summer this year) has resulted in a risk within popular water beauty spots within the Scottish Borders area and this is something that area personnel will address as a matter of course in the run up to Spring/Summer 2022. We will plan initiatives to address this risk and evaluate in order that we can ensure we are making a difference.

Next steps Will this project continue? What are the plans for the project in the future and what is needed for this to happen?

The project will certainly continue. We will be looking to run future events during School holidays to ensure that children and young people get the opportunity to experience our demonstrations and can ask questions. We will be looking to get into the schools or playgrounds to demonstrate safe practices around the water courses. In the meantime, we will be delivering presentations and videos via Microsoft teams and YouTube

Additional Information (include any other relevant information, such as links to other websites or reports)

Link to ITV Border report - <https://fb.watch/7C0TRQCZ2j/>

Link To Southern Reporter - <https://www.thesouthernreporter.co.uk/news/environment/a-kelso-mum-who-endured-the-death-of-two-sons-in-the-river-tweed-offers-hope-after-lifebuoy-unveiling-3356465>

Date: 16 September 2021

Signed:

