

Organise Your Own Dive Festival – Tips from



20 years ago, a group of BSAC branches in Cornwall and Devon started working together to share instructors and run training weekends for courses that were difficult to organise within a small branch. This helped the branches who had few instructors and fewer facilities.

This inter-branch co-operation quickly developed into an annual dive festival which, as the Kernow Dive Fest, is now in its 14th year. From the start, the Kernow

Dive Fest supported a charity, DDRC

Healthcare, who run the main

hyperbaric facility in the region.

This is a brief guide, based on our experiences.

1. Enlist help to contact other branches

Tip from Chris Lobb, Mid Cornwall Divers. “We got hold of the active coaches and involved them from the start. They helped us contact the decision makers in the other clubs.”

2. Choose a charity

Tip from Jon Parlour, DDRC. “Choose a charity that has a connection with diving. Doing it all for charity takes the commercial aspect away and makes your event affordable for everyone.”

3. Location, Location!

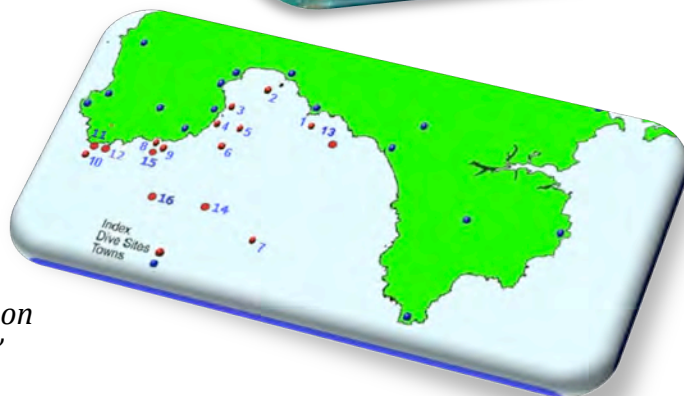
Tip from Brendon Rowe, Peninsula Club. “We used our list of dive sites out of Penzance where there is great launching and we are on good terms with the harbourmaster and campsite! We also take on responsibility for marking the sites before the event..”

4. Dive sites, dates and accounts

Tip from Dave White, Kernow organiser and area coach. “You must get the boats back to change over divers for the subsequent dives. We have dive sites which are only 10 mins away and others up to 45 mins. Have a range of sites suitable for all diver grades. No training! This is not a training weekend and you need to switch boats over quickly to get everyone in the water.”

Tip from John Adams, Seahawk SAC. “Choose a weekend with good tides and away from holidays! It makes travel and camp sites easier and cheaper! Our 2016 event is 11/12th June.”

Tip from Allen Murray, Totnes SAC. “We set up a separate bank account to hold any money associated with the event and keep annual accounts which can be made available if anyone wants to know where the money goes.”



5. The concept

Have some simple aims so that everyone is pulling together for your festival. We find these aims work well:

- To dive with divers from other branches
- To have a range of fantastic sites suitable for all grades of divers
- To have a great party and make friends in other branches
- To raise money for charity (DDRC, Plymouth).



£25,000 for DDRC to date!

6. How does it work?

Club members book through their own branch. Diving Officers countersign the booking form agreeing the members' suitability for their chosen dive(s).

Branches commit to bring their boats at their own cost to the weekend.

Branches get back the cost of all boat fuel used for all diving. (Arrive with full tank).

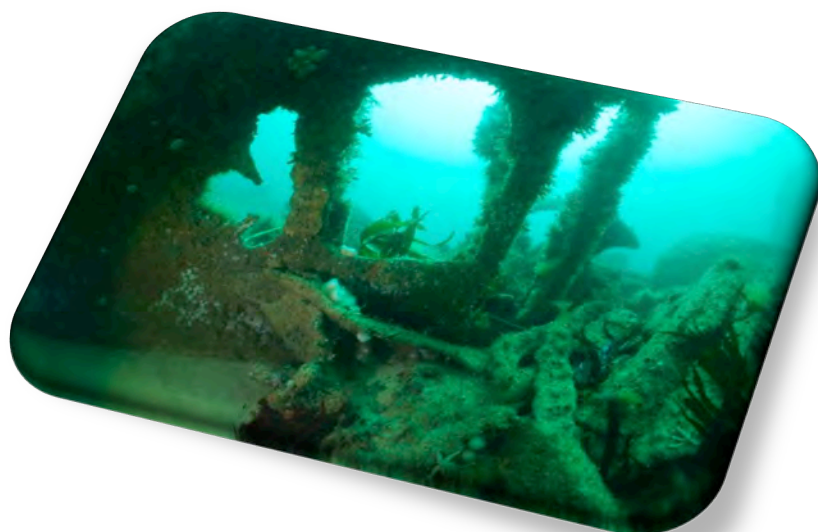
Branches complete the attendance form, collect the money and forward it to the festival treasurer well before the event.

Branches give a 'heads-up' on numbers and boats attending to enable rough planning.

The final forms returned 2-3 weeks beforehand, allowing organisers to work out the boat and diving schedule!

Divers from different branches are 'buddied' together, depending on their choice of dive site and qualification. There is a mix of divers from different branches on the boats.

Have a specific website or Facebook page for the event to aid communication with branches.



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At least one member (often more) from each branch is on their own branch boat.

Branch representatives need to have the will to make it work – they must move the event forward.

Boats are only handled by qualified diver coxswains. At some point in the day, a branch boat might be handled by a coxswain from another branch, if needed.

The Festival Fee (we are charging £25 a head for our 2016 festival) includes the boat fuel for all the diving and the BBQ on Saturday evening. Nothing more.

Have a t- shirt for the event to make more money for your charity.



Organise a raffle and auction to raise more money at the evening BBQ.

Each branch provides raffle prizes.

No organiser takes any fee or expenses – all is done for charity.

Campsite fees are negotiated at a special rate – collected by the branches and paid in bulk on arrival to the campsite.

Free launching is negotiated with the Harbourmaster well in advance.

Diving is run to BSAC 'Safe Diving' recommendations.

7. Sample calendar for an event in June or early July

September – November

Initial meeting – Who? Main decision makers from local branches

- Decide date, location and price!
- Decide on main dive sites, qualifications.
- Appoint treasurer and main contact.
- Tell everyone!
- Make a booking form and distribute it early!
- Set date for March Festival meeting.

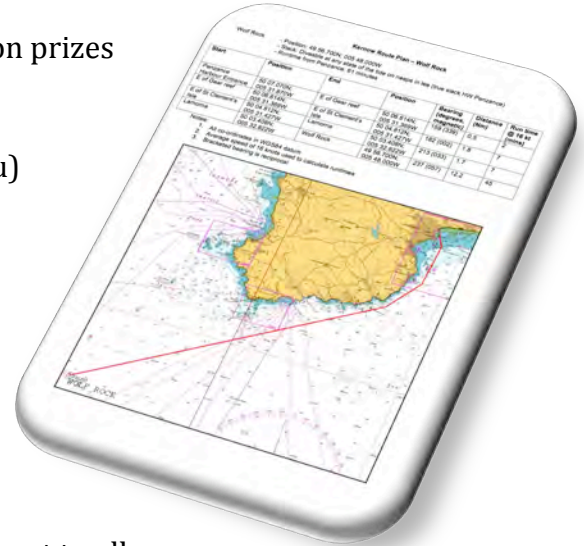
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March

Festival meeting – Branch DOs share out the jobs!

- Marking the sites (to be done two weeks before event)
- Making up the route cards for each dive boat trip including 'ropes-off' times
- Allocating divers and coxswains to boats
- Organising the raffle and contacting sponsors for auction prizes
- Organising the t-shirts
- Organising the BBQ
- Contact Coastguard (they may allocate a channel for you)
- Contacting Harbourmaster
- Contacting campsite to negotiate pricing for the festival
- Marquee for the evening or bring brollies and wellies?



2 weeks before (Lots of email contact going on now...)

- Final forms and money received
- T-shirts delivered
- Boats and diver buddies allocated
- Master sheet of divers / boats / sites / 'ropes off' times sent to all Branch DOs
- Club organising BBQ informed of final numbers.

1 week before

- Correct all the mistakes on the allocation sheet pointed out by the branch DOs!

Friday of the Event Weekend

- Arrive at campsite
- Meals arranged locally in a venue that can take lots of people (we use the campsite bar)
- Safety Briefing for all Diver Coxswains and DOs.

Saturday

- Early launch of all boats
- Diving all day with groups and coxswains switching boats according to the plan
- Beach managers making sure divers and boats get away on time
- Boats checking in with 'control' when on site and returning
- Back to the campsite
- Get the BBQ going
- Party and raffle followed by Auction!

Sunday

Diving is organised on an ad-hoc basis depending on who is fit to dive. (We leave this open – any pre planning may be adversely affected by success of the party!)

Good luck with your Dive Festival! If you need help – ask us (follow link below)