

## **PRESS RELEASE**

6 September 2011

### **National Marine Aquarium celebrates a bumper summer**

With the summer holidays now officially over, the team at the National Marine Aquarium have been celebrating a bumper summer season with record visitor numbers.

More than 52,000 people visited the Plymouth-attraction this summer, up 6% on the number during the 2010 season – and above expectations set out by the Aquarium at the beginning of the year. What's more, 87% of those who visited the Aquarium over the summer months said that they enjoyed a positive experience as part of their visit.

Families visiting the Aquarium – the largest in the UK – during the summer holidays have been treated to a wealth of new exhibits, talks and shows, including daily interactive Science Shows, which have proved a real hit with young and old visitors alike. As part of the summer Science Shows, budding boffins were given the opportunity to don a lab coat and safety specs and join the Aquarium's mad scientists to mix potions, take a close-up look at some of the Aquarium's specimens and experiment in the Aquarium's new purpose-built AquaLab facilities.

Other new attractions which have proved popular with visitors this summer have been one of the Aquarium's latest centre-piece exhibits, the Eddystone tank – which has been designed to meticulously mirror life on Plymouth's own Eddystone Reef with creatures including grey mullet, flatfish, conger eels and wrasse, alongside native sharks, lobsters and crabs.

Dr David Gibson, Managing Director of the National Marine Aquarium, commented: "We are delighted with the visitor numbers we have seen at the Aquarium over the summer holidays, we surpassed even our own expectations of what we could achieve this year.

"There's no doubt that it's been a challenging year for us, and the tourism industry as a whole, but our interactive Science Shows proved hugely popular with our visitors of all ages, and as usual, the team at the Aquarium really added that special touch to everyone's experience."

Meanwhile, as the summer draws to a close, the team at the Aquarium are looking forward to the start of the autumn term and welcoming thousands of school children and students to its newly-completed £500,000 learning facilities, Just Add H<sub>2</sub>O. The world-class facilities offer all students – from primary school pupils to post graduate students and marine experts - educational resources and programmes to support all areas of experiential, hands-on and online learning.

Dr Gibson continues: “We are now looking to continue this summer’s success with our Just Add H<sub>2</sub>O education facilities ready to welcome students in the next few weeks, plus we have plenty of fun activities including a sleeping with sharks evening and a Big Draw event planned for October half term.”

- ENDS -

**Issued on behalf of:**

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**Notes to editors:**

The National Marine Aquarium is a registered charity committed to promoting a sympathetic understanding of the sea through programmes of education, conservation and research. With a mission to *drive marine conservation through engagement*, the National Marine Aquarium operates the largest public aquarium in the UK and is the lead partner in Just Add H<sub>2</sub>O, a programme for schools that aims to *bring the marine curriculum alive*.

Opened in 1998, the National Marine Aquarium is based in Plymouth, marine centre of the UK, and has since become one of the most popular attractions in the region - attracting more than 260,000 visitors every year.

With over 4,000 marine animals and Britain’s deepest tank – measuring 10.5m deep – the National Marine Aquarium includes new exhibits for 2011 including the Eddystone tank and a state-of-the-art new learning centre, as part of Just Add H<sub>2</sub>O programme.

More information about National Marine Aquarium is available at  
[www.national-aquarium.co.uk](http://www.national-aquarium.co.uk)