

## LUNDY MARINE CONSULTATION GROUP

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Notes of the 11th Meeting of the Consultation Group which was held on Thursday, 22nd November 1990 in the Town Hall, Bridge Street, Bideford at 7.00 pm.

### Present:

R. Kimberley	(Devon Sea Fisheries Committee, Chair)
N. Downes	(Devon Sea Fisheries Committee)
S. Warman	(Nature Conservancy Council)
J. Baker	(Royal Yachting Association)
P. Broomhead	(National Trust)
A. Gibson	(Lundy Warden, LT/LC)
R. Tait	(Devon Wildlife Trust)
C. Mandry	(British Sub-Aqua Club & Ilfracombe Sub-Aqua Club)
R. Irving	(Lundy Field Society, Hon. Sec.)

### 1. Apologies for absence:

J. Puddy	(LT/LC, Lundy Agent)
R. Gomm	(Nature Conservancy Council)
M. Havard	(World Wide Fund for Nature)
C. Heeps	(Marine Conservation Society)
J. Edwards	(Devon Wildlife Trust)

2. Notes on the last meeting, held on Thursday, 5th July 1990 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, having been proposed by N. Downes and seconded by S. Warman.

3. Matters arising: A letter had been written to the Department of Transport inviting a representative to address the Group's next meeting, but as responsibility for the Protection of Wrecks was about to pass out of their hands to the Department of the Environment, this invitation was declined. Stephen Warman reported that it appeared there had been an oversight by the Department concerning the lack of consultation prior to designation of the "Cannon" site, and an informal apology had been passed on to the NCC. Chris Mandry asked whether the wreck of the "Robert", a popular diving site, was included within the restricted area around the wreck of the "Iona II". Andrew Gibson, the island's Warden and the DoT's licensee, stated the "Robert" was just outside the 50m limit around the "Iona II", but this was not widely known by sports divers. The Secretary was asked to request the DoT to notify sports divers of this, by means of a notice in diving magazines.

4. Report from the Reserve: Andrew Gibson presented this. Diving groups had visited the island throughout the summer, mostly on visiting boats. The majority had remained on the east coast,

with only the local dive clubs (e.g. Ilfracombe) venturing round to dive on the west side.

A "greasy slime" had been reported by divers covering vertical bedrock surfaces (and particularly over jewel anemones) around the north end of the island. This was first reported in April and remained present until early July, after which it appeared to clear. No samples had been taken despite the Warden requesting divers to do so. The origin of the slime was unknown, though the possibility of it deriving from dumped sewage sludge was raised. A representative of SW Water had recently explained to N Devon MCS members that it had probably come about from an algal "bloom". These occur when optimal conditions (sunlight, temperature and nutrients) are met. Some large sea fans were reported damaged, but the cause of this was not known.

Only a small amount of litter had been washed ashore during the second half of the summer and the autumn. However, Ray Kimberley pointed out that fishermen had been catching large quantities of plastics in their trawls off the west side of the island in June and July.

Potting activity: About 40 mins. of the meeting were spent discussing the current level of potting within the Reserve. Andrew Gibson reported that questionnaires returned by divers during the summer indicated that far fewer edible crabs and lobsters were now being seen within the Reserve in comparison to recent years. Certainly the number of pots that were being set is now at a much higher level, particularly around the west side of the island. It was also noted that many of these pots were badly marked, creating a navigational hazard for all craft especially in the area around Surf Point and the passage in and out of the Landing Bay. Most potting activity is currently from boats operating out of Ilfracombe.

Neil Downes reported that landings of lobsters and crabs were decreasing all over the country. Initially when this happens, more effort is put in by fishermen (in terms of investing in extra gear) in order to maintain their catch numbers, but soon this leads to overfishing and a substantial decrease in stock numbers. It was pointed out that obtaining evidence of the decline in numbers based on scientific method would be very difficult. Peter Broomhead remarked of the scandal that what appeared to be overfishing was taking place within a Marine Nature Reserve. Andrew Gibson reported that within marine reserves in other parts of the world, restrictions on fishing practices had been shown to work to the benefit of the fishing industry: reserves acted as nursery areas and good catches were made outside the boundary limits.

The possibility of introducing a ban on potting of some form or other was raised by Neil Downes. This could be in the form of either 1) a geographically restricted zone (e.g. the north half of the island); 2) a temporary ban (e.g. for certain months of the year); 3) a total ban on potting at all times and in all places; or 4) a ban on all forms of fishing within the Reserve (this could be qualified in byelaw as fishing from boats, and would therefore exclude shore angling). A new byelaw could be introduced on the grounds of conservation and navigation. John Baker pointed out that the introduction of a new byelaw would

bring about policing difficulties and reminded the DSFC that additional resources may be required to do this. It was agreed that Neil Downes would arrange to discuss the matter further with representatives of MAFF and report back to the Group at its next meeting.

5. Activities 1990/1991: The count of seal pups in caves, which had been planned to be undertaken at the end of September, had had to be cancelled due to bad weather. The number of pups observed on beaches appeared to be about the same as last year. Regarding a possible count of seal numbers: no contact had been established with the Sea Mammal Research Unit in Cambridge, but close liaison existed with the Marine Conservation Society in Ross-on-Wye. Several basking sharks had been seen during the second half of the summer, together with sightings of a pilot whale, a sunfish and a turtle offshore. There had also been an increase in sightings of basking sharks, sunfish and dolphins by members of the Ilfracombe diving club on their trips over to Lundy.

The NCC's sublittoral monitoring programme had continued this year with a week-long visit in July. The team of 5, led by Robert Irving, had re-photographed sites at the Quarries, the Knoll Pins and at Gannets' Rock, and taken viewpoint photographs of life growing on the wreck of the "Robert". No provision had been made for analysis of the results, though one of the recommendations of the consequent report was to suggest that the results since 1984 be looked at carefully in order to draw conclusions relating to species longevity and recruitment. Underwater markers made of ferrous metal would need replacing with stainless steel or brass equivalents in the near future to avoid time-wasting maintenance tasks. Stephen Warman informed the Group that the NCC would be splitting into three country units next April, and though this may lead to considerable reorganisation of resources, it was hoped that the monitoring within the Marine Reserve would continue.

6. Landing Beach, Lundy: construction work. Andrew Gibson reported that there had been little alteration to the state of the Landing Beach due to spring tides at the end of September, as there had been only slight easterly winds to back the tide. The sediment plume up the east side continued to give rise to concern, though there was little going further than 20-30 yds offshore. The beach seemed to be gradually returning to its appearance two years ago. The roadway was to be "consolidated" and finished in due course. No further spoil would be dumped on the shore but taken onto the top of the island. It was possible the Divers' Beach breakwater may be extended by a further 30 ft to allow for landings to be made there at all states of the tide. The NCC were in consultation with the Landmark Trust over this.
7. Any other business: 1) Chris Mandry expressed concern at the number of visiting divers who were not using surface marker buoys (SMBs), especially when diving on the "Carmine Filomena" (N of Surf Point) and at Gannets' Rock. An accident could easily result if a surface vessel was unaware<sup>of</sup> an unmarked diver. Stephen Warman agreed that NCC could include a sentence in the Reserve's Code of Conduct that all divers use SMBs.

2) Could there be a fixed mooring point at the Knoll Pins, to ensure dive boats don't anchor (knowledge of the byelaw prohibiting this is often not known by visiting skippers)? NCC would look into this.

3) Concern was expressed about the practice of sewage sludge dumping in the Bristol Channel to the east of the island with respect to the welfare of the island's marine life. Dumping takes place from the "Glen Avon" which operates out of Avonmouth during a 2 hour period before low water (= slack water). This means the waste is often not properly flushed out of Bideford Bay. The situation is compounded by the number of short outfalls presently entering the Taw-Torrige system. The Secretary was asked to write to the two local MPs (Emma Nicholson and Tony Speller) expressing the Group's concern in this matter.

8. Date of next meetings: Thursday, 9th May 1991 at 7.00 pm in Bideford Town Hall; Thursday, 5th September 1991 (note: this is a week earlier than agreed).

*R. H. Kimberley (Chair)*  
*23<sup>rd</sup> May 1991*