

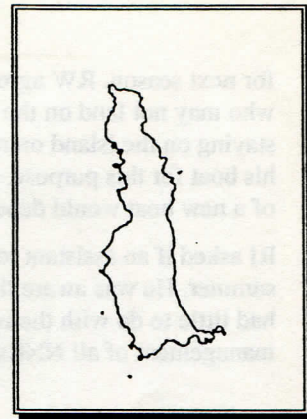
# LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP

*Aims of the Group: 1) to provide a nucleus of expertise on the marine habitats and waters surrounding Lundy; 2) to provide a forum for exchanging views on present and proposed activities around Lundy; 3) to safeguard the interests of all those who use the waters around Lundy and its natural resources; and 4) to advise the Management Group for the Reserve.*

*Established 1985*

*Please reply to the Hon. Secretary:*

Mr Robert Irving,  
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## Notes of the 5th meeting of the Advisory Group

(formerly known as the Lundy Marine Consultation Group, of which this was the 23rd meeting)

held on **Thursday, 17th October 1996** in the meeting room,  
Torridge District Council Offices, Riverbank House, Bideford at 7.00 pm

### *Present:*

Ian Knight	(IK)	Torridge District Council	[Chair]
Keith Bower	(KB)	Devon Sea Fisheries Committee	
Chris Mandry	(CM)	British Sub-Aqua Club & Ilfracombe and North Devon Sub-Aqua Club	
Max Montgomery	(MM)	Hartland Heritage Coast Service	
Nick Phillips	(NP)	N. Devon Sea Angling Assoc. / South-West Federation of Sea Anglers	
Clive Pearson	(CP)	Skipper, charter boat 'Jessica Hettie'	
Rev. Bill Blakey	(WB)	Lundy Church	
Colin George	(CG)	M.A.F.F. (Plymouth)	
Stephen Mulberry	(SM)	National Trust	
Rob Walton	(RW)	English Nature (Devon)	
Robert Irving	(RI)	Lundy Field Society	[Secretary]

**1. Apologies for absence:** Apologies had been received from Emma Parkes (Lundy); Tom Hynes (Hartland Heritage Coast Service); Richard White (Devon Wildlife Trust); Paul Gilliland (English Nature); Sián Pullen (WWF-UK); Sarah Welton (Marine Conservation Society); John Heath (marine archaeological interests & seals); Steve Waring (Nautical Archaeological Society); Alan James (U/w photographer); Mike Williams (Environment Agency); Laurie & Mark Winsborrow (Bideford Fishermen's Association); Neil Downes (Devon Sea Fisheries Committee); Keith Denby (Ilfracombe Sub-Aqua Club); Anthony Glover (Skipper, charter boat *Datchet*).

**2. Notes on the last meeting, held on 18th April 1996:** These were accepted as being an accurate account of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

**3. Matters arising:** CM asked if it was known whether Paul Gilliland had managed to write an article about the reserve for the diving press. RI had been informed that he had and it was due for publication as a 'News' article in November's edition of Diver magazine.

SM asked if the RoxAnn habitat mapping survey had been completed this summer. RW explained that it had and that a full report of the work was due to be completed by the end of December 1996. Funding for this had come about as a result of the candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC) status of Lundy.

CM asked what the position now was regarding the warden's RIB. He was aware of several visiting boats not landing their passengers on the island this summer and thus being ignorant of the MNR and the Code of Conduct. RW explained that a boat had been delivered at the start of the summer but that it was found to be an inappropriate design to take all the safety equipment that was required. It had therefore been returned to the manufacturers (Humber) and a wider boat (a model known as a 'destroyer') would be ready

*The following organisations sit on the Advisory Group:* British Sub-Aqua Club \* Devon Sea Fisheries Committee \* Devon Wildlife Trust \* English Nature \* Hartland Heritage Coast Service \* Landmark Trust \* Local Sea Fishing Interests \* The Lundy Company Ltd. \* Lundy Field Society \* Marine Archaeological Interests \* Marine Conservation Society \* Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food \* National Rivers Authority \* National Trust \* Royal Yachting Association \* Torridge District Council \* Worldwide Fund for Nature UK

for next season. RW agreed that it was necessary for the warden to get to speak to those in visiting craft who may not land on the island. There was also talk of the island purchasing another boat to take those staying on the island on round-the-island trips. CP asked if this would mean he would loose out on using his boat for this purpose, which he had been doing this summer. The answer was possibly, but the purchase of a new boat would depend on the outcome of funding applications by LT.

RI asked if an assistant to the warden would be appointed next summer, as had been suggested for this summer. He was aware that a student had spent a number of weeks with Emma this summer, but who had had little to do with the marine reserve. RW replied yes, if funds allowed, but these were very tight for management of all NNRs in the south-west.

**4. Matters arising from the Lundy MNR Management Group:** Minutes of the last Management Group (held on 10 May 1996 in Taunton) had been circulated to members of the Advisory Group. RW pointed out that, as a correction to section 5.2, EN would be seeking to purchase lifejackets based on the *safest* option and not the *cheapest* as stated.

Earlier in the day, RW (together with Paul Roberts and Reg Lo-vell of the Landmark Trust) had interviewed five candidates for the warden's post, and had selected two to visit the island next week prior to offering the job to one of them. 50-60 applications had been received following the advertising of the post. CM asked if the warden's job description was to be altered, so that more emphasis could be placed on the marine side of the job. RW explained that although 100% of funding for the post came from EN, the work programme was worked out in agreement with LT. Officially, 80% of the warden's time should be devoted to nature conservation activities, with the remaining 20% for general island duties. In the absence of any LT representatives being present, WB explained that the island was, and still is, short staffed, with a particularly acute shortage at the moment. It looked as though only 8 people would be on the island this winter. Emma Parkes had performed her numerous conservation-related tasks extremely well whilst under considerable pressure. RI asked if those on the interview panel were competent to assess the marine biological qualifications of the interviewees. RW explained that the candidates' qualifications on paper appeared very good. He would like to hear from anyone on the Advisory Group if they wished to see the warden's job description altered.

RW said that Paul Roberts of LT was keen to promote the marine reserve further, and indeed, applications were being put in for both European '5B' funding and lottery money to improve many aspects of the island's set-up including interpretative facilities.

**5. Report from the Reserve (April - September 1996) - Emma Parkes:** in Emma's absence, this was read out by RI.

#### 1. Fishing Activity

The first pots were seen out around the island in late April. The numbers of strings gradually increased during May and reached numbers which seemed well above those last year. Potting has been concentrated on the west side and south end with upwards of 28 strings of pots counted in late June. Towards the end of the summer, potting activity was gradually reduced. Boats seen fishing have included BD37 *Osprey*, CF43 *Better Days*, PW364 *The Orcades II*, and WY1 *Walrus* close in to the island, and PW100, BD220, GY165, PW429 and PD366 further off.

Some problems have been experienced:-

- The *Walrus* laid a string of pots in the Sanctuary Zone on the east side and also very close inshore in the Landing Bay area, obstructing island moorings. After receiving information from the Sea Fisheries Committee, pots in these areas were removed. *Better Days* was potting in the same areas (Sanctuary Zone) later in the summer. This was reported to DSFC and no further problems experienced.
- In late August GY165 *Pace Maker* laid a mooring to the north of the Landing Bay. On two occasions the boat was observed carrying out what looked like trawling from the Landing Bay moving north. She was observed from another boat in the Bay putting out and later hauling in a small trawl. DSFC contacted the boat owner and the skipper then contacted the island to explain the situation. They had lost a keep pot in the Bay and were trawling with an anchor to try and retrieve it. The *Pacemaker* usually works as a potter (sometimes for whelks). The skipper is now aware of the restrictions within the reserve and is in contact with the island. (Difficult to know who's telling the truth here: he certainly appeared to be trawling. At least he now knows the restrictions).

- Another incident was reported off the west side, where one of the dive boats *Datchet* caught a tangle net whilst pulling up anchor. There appeared to be four or five tangle nets laid off the west side. Although some were outside the restricted area, two nets were close in. PW100 was observed hauling nets off the west side and DSFC were informed.
- One local dive group reported several lost pots around the north end (Hen & Chickens). They estimated there might be as many as three lost strings, with several pots (parlours) still intact.

## 2. Diving numbers

After a very quiet start to the diving season, numbers picked up during June. All of the local charter skippers (four who regularly operate) have commented that publicity from the *Sea Empress* oil spill has adversely affected business. July and August were very busy months, often with several groups staying on the island at the same time. Landmark have now made a firm decision to avoid double booking dive groups which should relieve pressure on staff time and facilities. There are plans to replace the present compressor with a fully automatic coin-operated system sited on the beach (still, we will believe it when we see it!). Diver numbers for all diving visitors during 1996 (charter boats, local clubs and independent groups) have been collated, reaching an approximate total of 2355 diver days (this is an estimate but gives an idea of figures).

## 3. Diver damage

There have been reports and observations of damage by divers. Two large pieces of Ross coral were found loose at the base of the Knoll Pins, both recently knocked off the rock face. The remains of a brass rudder was lifted by one visiting group from the site of the *Montagu*. This caused unrest amongst local clubs and charter skippers who are not in favour of collecting. After some discussion, the piece was 'donated' by the club for display in the Tavern. Some local divers feel that more guidance should be given to divers who are new to the reserve.

## 4. Diver questionnaire

Information packs containing questionnaires were distributed to all local clubs and skippers early in the season. Returns of the questionnaire have so far been disappointing, the information has not been collated in the hope that further returns will arrive at the end of the season. The present system does not seem to result in very good returns and a new method of getting questionnaires back should perhaps be looked at.

## 5. Protected wreck sites

During the busiest part of the diving season, problems were experienced with the *Iona II* wreck site. This site is frequently dived by both local clubs and charter boats. Often skippers drop divers on the nearby wreck of the *Robert*, informing divers in which direction the *Iona* lies. Some local clubs and visiting divers interested in the site are on the license but most are not, though this does not stop them diving the site. The present system seems to provide little deterrent to divers.

Philip Robertson visited this summer to complete the survey of the *Iona II* wreck site. During his stay he organised an open day on the *Iona II*, which was well received by visiting divers, with two groups taking part. Divers were given information about the wreck and pointers to look for while under water - perhaps a useful idea for the future management of the site?

## 6. Grey seals

During June, a young male seal was found on the Landing Beach in a rather lethargic state, and was identified by a tag as a release from the Gweek seal sanctuary. The seal was one of last year's pups taken to Gweek in mid-October suffering malnourishment. It was released in Cornwall in May of this year. The seal appeared basically healthy although lethargic and slightly out of condition, probably just beginning to moult. Several dive groups have reported underwater encounters with seals at sites around the island: Gannets Bay, Knoll Pins, *Montagu*, Rattles, and the Landing Bay. We hope that John Heath will be able to continue his monitoring work in the future.

## 7. RIB

After undergoing time at sea, several minor problems with the new Humber RIB were evident. The boat has been returned to Humber who are in the process of re-fitting a 'Destroyer' with the original engines. The alterations are being discussed with Humber as they progress.

#### 8. Snorkelling

The weather has not been ideal for snorkelling this year with some prolonged spells of easterly winds. Despite this, a total of 80 people have taken part in and (thanks to a young seal) enjoyed snorkelling sessions.

#### 9. Marine litter

Easterly winds at the end of September brought large amounts of litter into the Bay. Twelve bin liners of predominantly plastic litter were collected over three days.

#### 10. Interpretation

A small display on basking sharks has been added to the displays in the Church. A Marine Nature Reserve board has been added to the Heritage Coast display in the Fishermen's Hut on the Quay at Ilfracombe. Production of a general MNR board for display on the *Oldenburg* and at various sites around north Devon, has gone out to tender.

#### 11. Seabirds

Surveys of breeding seabirds have been completed, numbers seem fine, with kittiwakes having a particularly good season (no obvious *Sea Empress*-related problems).

#### 12. Plankton

A dense, soupy plankton bloom which began in late May was just beginning to clear by late June.

#### 13. Cetaceans

Sightings of two bottlenose dolphins off the west side on two consecutive days in early April. Porpoise are often (two or three times monthly) sighted from the *Oldenburg*, particularly when sailing along the Ilfracombe coast.

#### 14. Basking sharks

July was the month of the basking shark, with over 15 reported sightings (records sent to MCS). Many visitors saw sharks both from the island and the *Oldenburg*. Sightings continued into early August with a gap until one was seen in the first week in September.

#### 15. Leatherback Turtle

A large (over 5ft) Leatherback Turtle was seen at the end of August, swimming over the site of the wreck of the *Robert*. Divers on the charter boat *Datchet* watched the turtle for 10 mins. surface swimming and craning its neck to look around before diving from view. After a phone call to a local newspaper, the sighting generated considerable media interest!

#### 16. Other marine sightings

A whale was seen (by Philip Robertson & John Heath) off Gannets Bay in July. It was thought to be a Minke. Three sightings of sunfish were recorded - two off the south-east point over the site of the *Carmine Filomena*. Red band fish burrows, several with individuals present, were found off the Quarries and just north of the Knoll Pins on the east side.

#### 17. Marine monitoring

A group of MCS volunteers carried out a number of sublittoral tasks during a week in June (see report by RI elsewhere). A RoxAnn survey and ROV work to produce a sea bed habitat map of the whole reserve was completed (see earlier comment).

It was with great sadness that the Group had heard that Emma Parkes had decided to leave her job as warden and was now in Australia. The Group wished to pass on their collective thanks and gratitude to Emma for carrying out her work to a high standard of professionalism with a great deal of care and understanding. She had been a very popular personality on the island and would be sorely missed by islanders and visitors alike. The Group wished her every success in her future career.

#### **6. Discussion of other matters relating to the MNR:**

##### 1986 - 1996: 10 years of the MNR

RW pointed out that on 21 Nov. the MNR would be 10 years old. EN would like to celebrate this fact in some way and would welcome suggestions. A media specialist company, Ian McIntyre Associates, had

been contracted to oversee the publicity relating to this. Possible tie-ins could be the appointment of the new warden; the delivery of the new RIB; the new interpretative board on the *Oldenburg*.

CM said that the best celebration would be the introduction of a total ban on fishing within the MNR. He believed fishing pressure within the MNR was too great at present - why not have it as a refuge area? KB pointed out that there was a difference between preservation and conservation - a sustainable fishery could be maintained around the island. CG added that 15 years ago fishermen were persuaded that a sustainable resource would be maintained, and in so doing, the MNR was set up. CM said that he could still not understand why the attitude was still 'take' from the reserve. RI pointed out that there was certainly heavy potting pressure now being exerted and that this had increased in recent years. One wonders how much can be tolerated before it no longer is sustainable. KB confirmed there was no way of knowing how many crustacea were being caught from pots within the MNR, as opposed to outside it. RW asked if there was any evidence to show that pots were damaging the benthos (i.e. life on the sea bed). Both CM and RI confirmed that, so far, there was no evidence. KB said that Devon fishermen were still considering banning the use of parlour pots within the DSFC district. This initiative would be self-policing. The inshore lobster catch at Clovelly this year had been more successful than in the recent past, though the bigger boats working further offshore using parlour pots had been less successful. CM believed Keith Hiscock (of the JNCC) is aware of a video being (or soon to be) shot of pots descending from the boat to the sea bed. KB also pointed out that by using floating rope between the pots less damage was done to the benthos, but in shallow water, the floating line can cause a hazard to boats.

#### English Nature initiatives

- Two new TV screens had been purchased by EN for use on the *Oldenburg*, with an improved sound system. In addition, £150-worth of marine related books & posters had been presented for use by passengers on board the *Oldenburg*. Four new interpretative boards were to be designed and produced, with one being one board the boat.
- The meeting was asked if they thought it would be a good idea to re-issue or re-vamp the NCC colour booklet on the MNR which had come out in 1988. The answer was yes.
- Is the EN video shown on the boat for sale anywhere? RW didn't think so but would check. SM said that local NT shop managers would be willing to stock it and or the colour guides. IK wondered if the video could be lengthened - this would make it more attractive to buy.
- RW said that a new interpretative board is currently being housed in Ilfracombe's Fishermen's Hut. However, NP pointed out that if this was the hut used by Ilfracombe Angling Club, it should be kept locked! RW would appreciate confirmation on this.
- A survey of rockpools in Devils Kitchen in March (following the Sea Empress incident) by Colin Munro found no adverse effects. CP said that the publicity surrounding the oil spill had adversely affected his charter boat business. Others agreed that a certain amount of 'misinformation' had appeared at the time, with an apparent disregard for use of the 'proper channels' (i.e. through the County press office).

#### MCS Working Diving Party to Lundy, 22-29 June 1996

RI took a group of 8 volunteer divers over to the island in June to undertake a number of conservation-orientated projects. These were:-

1. Continuing counts of the sea fans off the east coast and measuring their condition. We were also to check if there were any on the west side of the island too;
2. To check for the presence of the sea slug *Tritonia nilsodhneri* on the fans;
3. To recover the data logging unit that last year's group had placed on the wreck of the *Robert* at about 20 m depth (bcd) off the east coast;
4. To assess the damage that pots may or may not be causing to the benthos off the west side;
5. To undertake a survey of the Landing Bay to check for litter and/or wreckage;
6. To re-photograph circalittoral communities of Mediterranean-Atlantic species (including cup corals) at the monitoring site at the Knoll Pins.

All the tasks were completed with varying degrees of success. Unfortunately, the visit coincided with a thick plankton bloom (mostly of *Phaeocystis*), which meant that underwater visibility rarely exceeded 3 m. The group were able to confirm the northern-most and southern-most extent of sea fans off the east coast. Of the 100+ sea fans inspected, a few had *Tritonia* sea slugs on them but not very many (last year they'd found none). They also came across a number of large sea fans growing in gullies off the west side, including one white specimen (which had been noted in earlier years). The data logger on the *Robert* was recovered (encrusted with worms and bryozoans after just 12 months of submersion), but we've since been told by English Nature that sea water had entered the casing a gummed up the electronics. They managed

to get round to the west side on two occasions (never easy in inflatables unless it's flat calm), but only a handful of pots were set at the time. These were carefully inspected, with only a few showing signs of actually having damaged the attached life. The litter survey in the Landing Bay came up with a couple of sweet wrappers and a piece of old rope - not surprising when one considers that the tide must regularly sweep the area clean. Photographs of the Knoll Pins cup coral were taken successfully and are due to be forwarded to English Nature to add to their on-going monitoring data.

**9. Any other business:**

- CP asked if there was to be a compressor on the island next year. This was a vital service for both visiting diving groups and for those staying on the island. It was suggested that he took this up with LT direct by contacting Paul Roberts of the LT at Crown Hill Fort, Plymouth.
- SM informed the Group that the NT had been notified by the appointed consultants (Posford Duvivier) of the *Bristol Channel Marine Aggregates: Resources and Constraints Research Project*, which was funded by the Welsh Office. A wide consultation exercise is an integral part of this study and various bodies are being contacted (which, besides the statutory agencies and the NT, includes the warden on Lundy and this Advisory Group). The final results of the project are due at the beginning of 1999. RI would respond on behalf of the Group, asking to be kept informed of developments.
- IK pointed out that the most recent Lundy stamp issue featured a commemoration of the first 50 years of the Society and included a stamp featuring life growing on the wreck of the *Robert*. RI added that a commemorative book was also being published early next year, which featured a chapter on the marine reserve (by RI and Paul Gilliland) and another on marine life (by Keith Hiscock).
- The MNR Zoning Scheme was due to be revised next year and Paul Gilliland at English Nature, Peterborough would welcome any suggested alterations.

**10. Dates of the next meetings:**

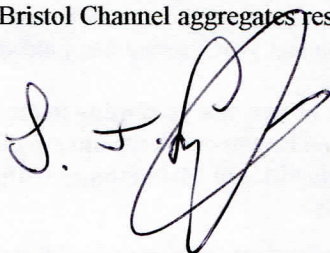
Thursday, 17th April 1997, 7 p.m.

Thursday, 16th October 1997, 7 p.m.

IK was asked to pass on thanks to Torridge District Council for allowing use of the room and for providing refreshments.

*Action points:*

- RW to check with Landmark Trust as to whether volunteer workers receive a discount on their fare to/from the island; and is there a discount for supplies? (Reported as not being the case by MM).
- RW to check whether EN's Lundy MNR video is available for sale.
- RW to contact Pippa Morrison (N Devon VMCA @ Ilfracombe) re. the MNR interpretative board in the Fishermen's Hut.
- RI to write to Posford Duvivier re. Bristol Channel aggregates research project.



Robert Irving  
22 October 1996