

LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP

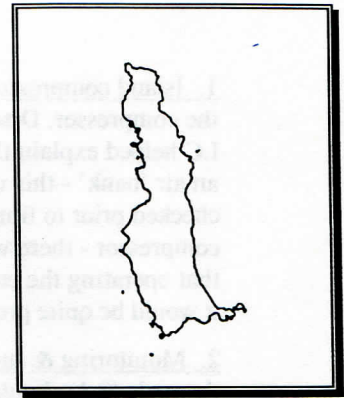
Aims of the Group: 1) to provide a nucleus of expertise on the marine habitats and waters surrounding Lundy;
2) to provide a forum for exchanging views on present and proposed activities around Lundy;
3) to safeguard the interests of all those who use the waters around Lundy and its natural resources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

Established: 1985

Please reply to the Hon. Secretary:

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Notes of the 6th meeting of the Advisory Group

(formerly known as the Lundy Marine Consultation Group, of which this was the 24th meeting)

held on **Tuesday, 15th April 1997** in the meeting room,
Torrige District Council Offices, Riverbank House, Bideford at 7.00 pm

Present:

Liza Cole	(LC)	Warden, Lundy	
Claire Mountjoy		Hallsanery FC (c/o Max Montgomery)	
Max Montgomery	(MM)	Hartland Heritage Coast Service	
Keith Denby	(KD)	Gratton Data Systems Ltd.	
Keith Bower	(KB)	Devon Sea Fisheries Committee	
Jo Crix	(JC)	English Nature (SW SAC officer)	
Chris Mandry	(CM)	British Sub-Aqua Club (SW)	
Len Hawke	(CG)	M.A.F.F. (N. Devon)	
Richard White	(RW)	(Devon Wildlife Trust)	
John Heath	(JH)	(Historic wreck sites & seals)	
Stephen Mulberry	(SM)	National Trust	
Clive Pearson	(CP)	Clovelly charters (charter boat 'Jessica Hettie')	
Nick Phillips	(NP)	South-West Federation of Sea Anglers / N. Devon Assoc. of Sea Anglers	
Pippa Morrison	(PM)	N. Devon Heritage Coast Service (VMCA)	
Rob Walton	(RW)	English Nature (Devon)	
Robert Irving	(RI)	Lundy Field Society	[Acting Chair/Secretary]

1. Apologies for absence: Apologies had been received from: Ian Knight (Torrige District Council, Chair); Tom Hynes (Hartland Heritage Coast Service); Paul Gilliland (English Nature); Siân Pullen (WWF-UK); Paul Roberts (Landmark Trust); Mike Williams (Environment Agency); Steve Waring (Nautical Archaeological Society); Laurie & Mark Winsborrow (Bideford Fishermen's Association); Reg Lo-vel (Lundy Administrator); Roger Hoad (Captain, MV *Oldenburg*).

2. Notes on the last meeting, held on 17th October 1996: These were accepted as being an accurate account of the meeting and will be signed by the Chairman at the next meeting.

3. Matters arising: There were no matters arising.

4. Matters arising from the Lundy MNR Management Group: Minutes of the last two Management Group meetings (held on 18 November 1996 and on 3 March 1997) had been circulated to members of the Advisory Group. (He apologised for a photocopying error which led to pages 2 & 4 being missed out). The latter meeting had been held at Martin's Haven, Pembrokeshire, at the invitation of the Management Group of the Skomer MNR. RW kindly ran through a number of points which arose at that latter meeting.

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 Dive Charter Interests * Local Sea Fishing Interests * The Lundy Company Ltd. * Lundy Field Society * Marine Archaeological Interests * Marine Conservation Society * Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food * Environment Agency * National Trust * South-West Federation of Sea Anglers * Torrige District Council * Worldwide Fund for Nature (UK)

1. Island compressor: It was apparent last year that too much of Emma's time was being spent operating the compressor. Discussions have been going on with Paul Roberts (LT) and Rob Walton (EN) about this. LC helped explain the problem and the alternatives to remedy it: a) install a coin-operated machine using an air 'bank' - this would probably require the issuing of tokens so that the test-dates of bottles could be checked prior to finning; b) insist that each visiting dive group has a member qualified to operate a compressor - there would need to be adequate insurance cover for the operator in this circumstance; or c) that operating the compressor would be part of the job of a Warden's assistant. On this last option, CP felt it would be quite profitable for the LT to do this, as for 10 hrs/wk @ £3/fill and, say, 6 fills/hr = £180.

2. Monitoring & survey programme: RW asked for comments on this. JH pointed out that monitoring of the seals (8.1) should take place every year at pupping time and possibly at moulting time. He mentioned his concern about boats passing too close to the shore to view seals, disturbing them unnecessarily. RW pointed out that this could be addressed in the Zoning Scheme, due for revision this year. Perhaps areas could be off-limits at different times of year.

RI pointed out that much of the proposed work assumed that MCS working parties would be visiting the island each year. Whilst he hopes this would be the case, there was no formal agreement at present that this should be so - RI organised the groups himself under no obligation to others. He suggested EN and MCS could draw up an agreement for 3 or 5 years continuing assistance.

RW pointed out that there was continuing concern about increased levels of potting (9.1). Neil Downes of DSFC has estimated that an average of 750 pots may be set within the MNR at any one time. Whilst there is no direct evidence of damage, EN feel that a precautionary approach should be adopted in order to guard against possible future damage through excessive numbers of pots being deployed. KB pointed out that recent legislation (a Bill passed on 27/2/97 as an addition to the Shellfish Act of 1966) identified lobsters & crabs¹ as being shellfish, and thus DSFC can introduce regulatory licences for their catches if they so wish. Such a move would take 3-5 years before it came into force however. DSFC cannot refuse to issue a licence, but it would give an indication of the level of activity. There may be conditions attached to the licences. Neil Downes has agreed to draft a briefing paper on this matter. LC is continuing to monitor pots within the MNR. The DSFC are looking at the population dynamics of lobsters through landings (i.e. size & sex of individuals). One possible means of limiting numbers landed would be to 'V-notch' the tail of certain individuals (in the ratio of 8 females to 1 male). It would then be an offence to be in possession of a V-notched lobster. This scheme had worked well in Ireland over the past few years.

JC informed the Group of progress on the interpretation front. The company Shelly Signs were in the processing of finishing four new boards. One of these would go on the Oldenburg; one at Bideford & one at Ilfracombe to replace existing boards; the siting of the fourth had still to be decided though it had been suggested to put it in the new Tourist Information Centre at Barnstaple. This was felt to be a good idea. There were still plans to update the MNR video using additional u/w footage acquired last summer, though it depended on whether there was sufficient funds available to do this. EN would discuss with LT about selling the remaining copies of the video in its present format.

5. The new Lundy SAC - adoption of the LMNRAG as the SAC Advisory Group:

JC explained the responsibilities associated with the new Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), especially with regards to the 'relevant authorities'. The Management Group would officially progress the SAC, with input from the Advisory Group as and when appropriate. This situation was agreed by those present. The Management Plan was due to be revised in 1999, though it was possible this may need to be done before that, with further emphasis on 'reef habitats' within the SAC being regarded as 'special features'. There is an obligation for EN to monitor the SAC in order to show that the area is being maintained and enhanced (where appropriate). It was agreed that meetings of the Management Group should take place shortly after those of the Advisory Group (as had happened in the past).

6. Report from the Reserve (December 1996 - April 1997) - Liza Cole:

1. Personal introduction: I took up the post at the beginning of December 1996, Emma having left the Island at the end of September, so unfortunately there was a period when there was no Warden on the Island. However, Emma left copious notes which helped me to get fairly well up to speed pretty easily. I was helped by the fact that I know Lundy pretty well, having been a visitor all my life and having worked

¹ The term 'shellfish' will only include those crustacea (lobsters and crabs) already covered by other legislation. So species such as the velvet swimming crab *Necora puber* are not included.

there as a seasonal worker and as a conservation volunteer with the Lundy Field Society. I have been working in conservation for over 7 years now and am a qualified SCUBA diver. The following report will cover the four months that I have been on the Island.

2. Marine Litter: The predominantly easterly winds of December and January brought up a large quantity of marine litter most of which was plastic. However, there was also a large amount of fishing line and nets on occasions. No dead birds recorded.

3. Cetaceans: The carcass of a Pygmy Sperm Whale was seen floating in the water off Victoria Beach on 7th January. It had obviously been at sea for a while and had been attacked by gulls. It washed up on Ladies Beach and part of the upper skull was recovered but unfortunately no lower jaw, which would have confirmed the identification of the animal. However, the Whale Strandings unit at the Natural History Museum, on seeing my description and sketch, agreed with my identification. This is only the fourth record of a Pygmy Sperm Whale in Britain and Ireland since their database began (1913). The others were at County Clare, Lynmouth and Worms Head.

4. Oil Pollution: There has been a couple of instances of oil pollution and oiled birds since December. One oiled guillemot was found on the Dive Beach on 7th February although there was no evidence of oil pollution on the Island. The bird was cleaned externally and sent off to the RSPCA. In the light of this incident, I went out for a day's training with the RSPCA to learn how to treat the birds internally as well as externally for future reference. Later on that month, tar balls, some as big as 6" in diameter, were found on the strandline.

On 29th March, globules of tarry oil were seen deposited on the Dive and Landing Beaches and in the water. This has continued to be the case and there was still a little present when I left the Island on 12th April. The oil was in enough quantity to be visually unpleasant and was continually monitored but did not seem to be causing an environmental impact. A sample has been sent to the Coastguard and any large globules were physically removed from the environment.

5. Fishing activity: There has been very little going on during my time on the Island so far, but a few strings of pots have been dropped off the south and west coast over the last couple of weeks. Fishing activity will continue to be monitored which will be made easier with the arrival of the RIB.

6. RIB: At present this is undergoing sea trials down in Cornwall with English Nature, and once it has been fully tested, it will come over to the Island. This should be within the next month.

7. Snorkelling: The snorkelling equipment has all been serviced and is ready for use. I will be undertaking the necessary additional training to take me up to Advanced Snorkelling Instructor level in the week starting 19th April.

8. Diving: Only one party of divers has been over since I took up the post. Colin Eastman (*Lundy Murrelet*) brought a group of 12 over in the first week of March. North-easterlies and poor visibility meant that only a few of them made one dive.

The set-up regarding filling bottles on the Island has been changed this year in the light of the fact that Emma was run ragged last year. Now we are working a first-come-first-served system and only the first 12 divers to book accommodation will be able to have their bottles filled on the Island. This is not an ideal solution, and any alternatives would be gratefully received. Any dive skippers who have their own compressors on board should be making a killing this year! If there are any who have portable compressors, we might be able to come to an arrangement of siting the on the Dive Beach.

I have contacted all the local dive clubs and charter boats that I am aware of, informing them of the new system and giving skippers a supply of Dive Information Packs to give to visiting groups. If there is anyone I have missed out then please get in touch.

9. Summer assistant: This season I have a voluntary assistant coming over to help me during June, July and August. He is called Iain Turner. He is a Rescue Diver and has worked in the fisheries industry and at a Sea Life Centre. I hope he is the assets he promises to be.

10. Lundy Agent: The post of Agent on the Island has now been split into two. Paul Roberts has taken up the post of Lundy General Manager, spending 2 or 3 days a week at Crownhill Fort, Plymouth (another Landmark property of which he is Manager), and 2 or 3 days a week at the Shore Office on Bideford Quay. He manages the Island and the Oldenburg. Reg Lo-vel is now the Island's Administrator based on Lundy and is in charge of the day-to-day running of the island. In addition there are now many new staff on the Island, with the total permanent compliment now being 19.

11. Beach Road: Again the beach road around to the Dive Beach has suffered from the combination of high tides and easterlies. It continues to be temporarily repaired. More permanent repairs have been included in the various grant applications that have been put forward recently.

12. Grant applications: Paul Roberts has put in grant applications to European 5B, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the National Trust for various projects to improve the facilities on the Island. Those relevant to the MNR are: consolidation of the Beach Road; a jetty; improved dive facilities (with a facility for interpreting the reserve) and a glass-bottomed boat. So far grant offers have been given to the sum of c. £2.5 million (from LT, NT & 5B), but these are conditional on receiving the remaining c. £2 million from the National Lottery. The Island is being assessed for this final sum at the moment and we should know the outcome by May or June. If the bid is successful, it is hoped work will begin at the end of this year. This would include consolidation of the beach road. Plans for the jetty are at present fairly sketchy, but it is hoped to start work on this at the end of 1998. If anyone wants further information then contact Paul Roberts through the Shore Office.

7. Proposed work within the MNR this summer:

JC explained that funds had been allocated this year for further study of circalittoral (deep) communities. It was possible that a further two monitoring sites would be established. Particular interest was being focused on the populations of the yellow cup coral *Leptopsammia pruvoti* and on algal depth limits. Keith Hiscock (JNCC) was likely to be involved with this work.

RI informed the Group that the report of last year's MCS Working Diving Party to Lundy is about to be distributed. If any members of the Advisory Group would like a copy, EN (c/o JC) would be able to provide a photocopy. He plans to take another group of 10 volunteer divers over to the island from 10-15 August aboard the *Datchet*, in order to undertake a number of conservation-orientated projects. Although a final work programme has yet to be agreed with EN and the Warden, it is likely to include the following projects:-

1. Continuing the mapping of sea fans, particularly off the west side of the island;
2. To check for the presence of the sea slug *Tritonia nilsodhneri* on the fans;
3. To recover the new data logging units that Chris Mandry will put in place in the next few weeks, in the Landing Bay and on the wreck of the *Robert* at about 20 m depth (bcd);
4. To verify data from the remote acoustic survey mapping sea bed types last summer;
5. To inspect the sea bed topography to the north of the Gannets' Rock pinnacle;
6. To re-photograph circalittoral communities of Mediterranean-Atlantic species (including cup corals) at the monitoring site at the Knoll Pins.

JH was hoping to make use of an 'electronic gun' at the Gull Rock protected wreck site at some stage this summer. This would allow for accurate distance measurements to be made between the various artefacts present on the sea bed there.

RW had had an introductory letter from a person (?from Majorca) who was investigating the possibility of operating a viewing-submarine within the MNR! Those present asked to be kept informed of developments on this front...

8. Any other business:

- LC asked if anyone could supply her with decent photographs/drawings of japweed *Sargassum muticum*, so that these could be distributed to interested parties. JC & RI offered assistance.
- CM pointed out that he was still willing to run an O₂ Administration Course, free of charge, for 3-4 people from Lundy who were interested, and who could spare a day in Ilfracombe.
- LH asked LC if she knew if any stocks of oil dispersant were kept on the Island, because if so they would need replacing. LC said none were.
- RW drew the Group's attention to an on-going project (part-funded by EN) on basking sharks, which Plymouth University were undertaking. This involved tagging & tracking of individual sharks. LH mentioned that the local MAFF office had recently responded to a request to fish basking sharks in the region.
- Copies of a newsletter, produced by Posford Duvivier on the first stages of the *Bristol Channel Marine Aggregates: Resources and Constraints Research Project* (funded by the Welsh Office), were made available.

- RI informed the Group that the LFS were about to publish a book entitled 'Island Studies - 50 years of the Lundy Field Society'. Copies were priced at £10 for members & £15 for non-members.

9. Lundy on the Internet: Keith Denby, a computer consultant and regular diver at Lundy with the Ilfracombe & N Devon BSAC, gave a demonstration of the Lundy pages which he has put on the Internet / World Wide Web, using a computer temporarily installed for the purpose. This proved most enlightening and was of great interest those present. It provided an opportunity to give out information about the MNR in particular, and already featured the Zoning Scheme; tidal movements; the *Oldenburg's* sailing times; rock climbing routes; and various links and contacts to other relevant pages.

The main concern, as expressed by CP, was that this would advertise Lundy even more, thereby attracting more divers to the place, which it could do without. It was agreed this was true, but it was a matter of either jump on the bandwagon or miss out on the opportunity entirely. This is certainly the way communication will develop in the next few years.

KD would welcome further input on the island's birds (RI said that LFS reps. should be able to help here). He was also looking for funding of the Web Site beyond this year. The main indexing would require about £500/yr to maintain. RW said that EN would need to know if it would provide value for money - i.e. how many times the site was being accessed - before being able to offer any funding.

10. Dates of the next meeting: Thursday, 16th October 1997, 7 p.m., at Riverbank House, Bideford

Robert Irving
18 April 1997

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Irving', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.