

LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP

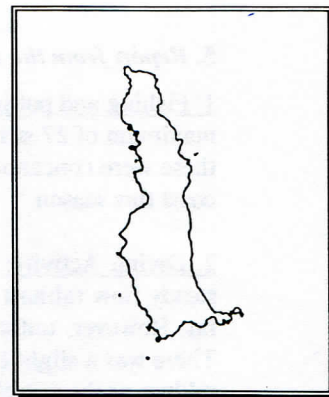
*Aims of the Group: 1) to provide a nucleus of expertise on the marine habitats and waters surrounding Lundy;
2) to provide a forum for exchanging views on present and proposed activities around Lundy;
3) to safeguard the interests of all those who use the waters around Lundy and its natural resources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

Established: 1985

Please reply to the Hon. Secretary:

Mr Robert Irving,
14 Brookland Way, Coldwaltham,
Pulborough, West Sussex RH20 1LT

tel. 01798 873581
fax. 01798 873582
e-mail: r.irding@dial.pipex.com



Notes of the 9th meeting of the Advisory Group

(formerly known as the Lundy Marine Consultation Group, of which this was the 27th meeting)

held on **Tuesday, 13th October 1998** in the meeting room,
Torridge District Council Offices, Riverbank House, Bideford at 7.00 pm

Present:

| | | | |
|-------------------|------|---|-----------|
| Ian Knight | (IK) | Torridge District Council | Chair |
| Liza Cole | (LC) | Warden, Lundy | |
| Paul Roberts | (PR) | Landmark Trust | |
| Keith Bower | (KB) | Devon Sea Fisheries Committee | |
| William Lawrence | (WL) | Devon Sea Fisheries Committee | |
| Jo Crix | (JC) | English Nature (SW SAC officer) | |
| Rob Walton | (RW) | English Nature (Devon) | |
| John Heath | (JH) | Historic wreck sites & seals | |
| Rev. Bill Blakey | (BB) | Lundy Church | |
| Chris Mandry | (CM) | Ilfracombe SAC & British Sub-Aqua Club (SW) | |
| Steve Waring | (SW) | Royal Commission for Historic Monuments in England/Nautical Archaeological Society | |
| Laurie Winsborrow | (LW) | Bideford Trawlermen's Association | |
| Mark Winsborrow | (MW) | Bideford Trawlermen's Association | |
| Peter Sawyer | (PS) | Charter Skipper, <i>Torridge Warrior</i> | |
| Colin Eastman | (CE) | Charter Skipper, <i>Lundy Murrelet</i> | |
| Clive Pearson | (CP) | Clovelly charters (charter boat ' <i>Jessica Hettie</i> ') | |
| Pippa Morrison | (PM) | N. Devon Heritage Coast Service (VMCA)/Devon Wildlife Trust | |
| Paul Clark | (PC) | Natural History Museum (guest) | |
| Robert Irving | (RI) | Lundy Field Society/Marine Conservation Society | Secretary |

1. Apologies for absence: Apologies had been received from: Tom Hynes (Hartland Heritage Coast Service); Roger Covey (English Nature); Sarah Jones (WWF-UK); Len Hawke (MAFF) and Richard White (Devon Wildlife Trust).

2. Notes on the last meeting, held on 15th April 1998: These were accepted as being an accurate account of the meeting (apart from the date of the meeting as being on 15th April 1997!) and were signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters arising: There were no matters arising.

4. Matters arising from the Lundy MNR Management Group: JC reported that the Management Group had not met since the last meeting of the Advisory Group, but that it was due to meet in a fortnight's time on 30th October 1998.

*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 * Torridge District Council * Worldwide Fund for Nature (UK)*

5. Report from the Reserve (April 1998 -October 1998) - Liza Cole:

1. Fishing and potting activity: The potting activity around the Island increased from 5 strings in April to a maximum of 27 strings in July and then decreased back down to a handful by the start of October. Most of these were concentrated around the south, west and north coasts with very few being seen around the east coast this season.

2. Diving Activity: The first diving party came to the Island towards the end of April and there was a steady flow (almost every weekend) until the first week in October, with July being the busiest month by far. However, unfortunately inclement weather over the season caused several groups to have to cancel. There was a slight change in the charter boats coming out to the Island year. The *Datchet* has been out very seldom as the vessel is being used for survey work and pleasure cruising more now. The *Our Unity* was a less frequent visitor also but the *Torridge Warrior* came over more often. The number of visits from the *Jessica Hettie* and the *Lundy Murrulet* remained about the same.

3. Diver Questionnaires: All the dive parties that I spoke to this season were asked to fill in Dive Questionnaires and were even given an SAE for their return. However, the rate of return was very disappointing with only 32 being received out of the hundreds that were given out. However, the data from the completed questionnaires have been loaded into a spreadsheet package and a summary of the results has been produced (see separate sheets attached to these notes).

There is still a need to instigate some sort of monitoring project for local clubs to carry out as they feel that the dive questionnaires are not really relevant to them and they could be supplying a lot more useful information

4. RIB: The RIB has been out on the water more this season, being used to patrol the MNR and also parts of the SSSI. For example, it proved really useful to count the Lundy Cabbage plants and spot those sneaky rhododendrons that were hiding over the cliff edge up towards three quarter wall. I only managed to get it in the water on 5 occasions (once a month from May to September) but during that time it proved invaluable. Both weather and time proved to be limiting factors. It was also used for EIA monitoring work for the Jetty in April, by the EN monitoring team in May and by the MCS volunteers in July.

The RIB has now got all the safety equipment it needs and I have programmed various way markers in on the GPS (which, incidently, also records speed; she does 26.5 knots flat out!!). I have also discovered that I am not able to launch it single handed (it ended up with two of us getting very wet & a lot of entertainment for everyone else!). I have arranged my Advanced Powerboat Handling course for December 14th & 15th.

5. Grey Seals: Every time the RIB was taken out seals were counted in addition to the other tasks being undertaken. Counts were also made from the Island. On one occasion 70 seals were counted around the Island. The first pup was seen towards the end of August and inclement weather has meant that it has not been possible to launch the RIB more than once during the pupping season. On October 1st a two-day-old pup (its umbilical cord had not shrivelled) hauled itself out on the Landing Beach, obviously washed off the rocks by the strong easterly winds and separated from its mother. The RSPCA was contacted for advice and they organised for a Chivenor helicopter to come out and collect it. It was so young that it would not have survived if it went back out to sea. However, it died the next day and a post-mortem showed that it had suffered secondary drowning and also had pneumonia. In light of this the RSPCA have arranged for me to spend a day at Gweek Seal Sanctuary learning what to do if a similar situation occurs again.

6. Cetaceans: There have only been two sightings of cetaceans from the Island this quarter: a small pod of 4-6 Common Dolphins off Brazen Ward (9/8/98) and an unidentified dolphin off the Battery (2/9/98). However, there have been quite a few sightings from the Oldenburg on the way over to the Island and a small pod entertained both crew and passengers alike by playing in the ship's bow wave on 28/9/98.

7. Basking Sharks: The huge shoal of sharks off the Cornish coast in the Spring seemed to auger well for sightings around Lundy this year, but it was not to be! The first shark was seen off the south end on 27th May and this was followed by a slow trickle of sightings throughout June, only 2 sightings in July and then a more steady flow of sightings in August and the last beast was seen on 3rd September. In total 61 animals were spotted from the Island this year (1 in May, 12 in June, 2 in July, 40 in August and 6 in September). However, the sharks were out there as a lot of animals were seen from boats travelling to Lundy. On more than one occasion the Oldenburg arrived late as she had hove to to watch the shoal of 30 or so sharks around the vessel.

8. Seabirds: It appears to have been a good breeding year for seabirds. The annual counts showed that numbers in general have stayed about the same again this year. Even though the formal counts made by the Assistant Warden suggested a decline in puffins from last year, I am of the opinion that there were many more around the Island this year compared to last.

9. Unusual Marine Sightings: There is now an Underwater Wildlife Log in the Tavern for divers to record any interesting sightings, this seems to have worked quite well in conjunction with the LFS Wildlife Log. An octopus was seen in April, two John Dories in June and one Red Band Fish south of Gull Rock in July (there were 6 burrows but only one individual was seen). In addition to this, 3 sunfish were seen, one off Rat Island, one off the north end and one off the Battery. Throughout July By-the-wind-Sailors were seen in ones and twos in the Landing Bay.

10. Interpretation: This year interpretation of the MNR was disrupted slightly by the Beach Road reparation work which has taken much longer than expected. This meant that Rocky Shore Rambles were not possible until the last week in June and Snorkelling Sessions started in the first week in July. However, apart from this slight blip the events were as popular as ever. The display area in the Church has been further improved to include a touch table and some feelie boxes and this interactive approach seems to be very popular with adults and children alike.

10. Assistant Warden: Jo Ramsey, who was doing an MSc in Coastal Zone Management, arrived at the end of May to spend 3 months on the Island as a voluntary Assistant Warden. Having her on the Island enabled me to have the shore cover necessary to carry out snorkelling sessions and to assist me in the launching and recovery of the RIB. In addition she met the boat on occasions so leaving me free to do something else, taking walks out for example. Not to mention work that just would not have got done without her. During her time on the Island she worked an average of 50 hours per week on top of the average 56 hour week being worked by the Warden. I managed to get £300 sponsorship from BSAC and Jo also received £300 from the College/EN Links Scheme to help with costs for her thesis. It is hoped that maybe more funding can be gained next year in order to employ a more experienced Assistant for a longer period of time.

A number of questions arose from the above report which are summarised here.

RI asked what the current number of puffins was thought to be. LC replied that a maximum of 20 birds had been seen this summer at one time. Six birds had been seen entering burrows during July (implying they had young inside), though without sandeels in their beaks. LW asked if the rat population was to blame for the decline in puffin numbers, with both the black and the brown rat present on the island. LC indicated this hasn't yet been proven though there are suspicions. RW pointed out that although black rats are rare in Britain (with Lundy being the only site where they are found living together with the brown rat), they were common elsewhere in the world. He suggested ridding the island of both rat species, so that the puffin and manx shearwater populations (both of which were rare outside Britain) might recover. Skomer has no rats yet has a puffin population of about 30,000 birds. Apparently black rats co-exists with various sea birds on the Shiant Islands in the Outer Hebrides without any obvious decline in the bird populations. RW agreed he would look at the policy paper he wrote about 3 years ago concerning this matter and re-issue it for comment.

6. Progress on the Beach Road and the new jetty in the Landing Bay - Paul Roberts: PR kindly brought the Group up-to-date with progress on these major structural engineering projects. Repairs to the road were now almost complete, though this was some way behind schedule. The last 20% of the job was taking 80% of the effort to accomplish. Gunnite (a form of concrete sprayed onto a retaining mesh) had been used to cover the retaining wall and the grey colour blended in well with the surroundings. The jetty 'head' on the rocks beside the Diving Huts was nearing completion. Planning permission for the jetty had been granted and tender documents for the construction of the jetty were now out. It is hoped that a contractor will be appointed by mid-November, though work may not start on the construction until the beginning of March. The drilling for the piles will take 4-6 weeks. Once these are in place, the remaining structure will be assembled from pre-cast slabs. It is hoped that the jetty will be completed by the end of June 1999. (Photomontages of how the jetty would look within the Landing Bay were circulated around the table).

PR pointed out that, as a result of the delays there were greater demands on the funding money which was strictly limited at £1 million. The length of the jetty would be shorter than originally envisaged. This would not affect the *Oldenburg* but access by other smaller craft on spring tides at low water would be difficult.

Passengers on the *Oldenburg* would disembark from the top deck at low water times, but this would be impossible for smaller craft. A ladder could be attached to the end of the jetty, but this would be for safety reasons only. The charter skippers present were not happy with this news. KB made the suggestion of using a floating pontoon at the end of the jetty, but this would entail more money. PR pointed out rock material on the Divers' Beach (also known as The Cove) could be removed, thus allowing a deeper water access to the small existing jetty than is there at present.

Work was also planned to start on re-developing the dive huts in October/November 1999, in order to have them ready for the year 2000 season. The 'Centre' would include an air bank, which could only be used by 'approved operators'. The intention of the Centre would be to improve access and understanding of the MNR and it would not be run as a commercial operation.

7. Work within the MNR this summer - Colin Munro & Robert Irving: CM, on contract to English Nature, had led a small group of marine biologists to the island in May in order to re-establish sublittoral monitoring sites at the Knoll Pins. He explained that new ringbolts marking the horizontal photographic monitoring transect had been put in place and that a series of overlapping photographs taken along it (last done about 10 years ago). Analysis of the photographs had shown a marked decline in the number of yellow cup corals *Leptopsammia pruvoti* along the transect. In addition to this transect, a new 'belt' transect, which was 2m wide on a near-vertical section of rock from about 15m to 20m depth (below chart datum), had been set up to the SW of the first transect. Within this 10m² area were many more sea fans, Ross 'corals' and large sponges than at the first site. Repeat counts of these species were undertaken by diver pairs in order to see how variable the counts were. The site was also photographed and video-ed. One of the recommendations of CM's report was that monitoring should be continued on an annual basis.

RW asked why the numbers of *Leptopsammia*, which was a priority species within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, had declined. CM said that there was no obvious reason as yet, although the boring by horseshoe worms at the base of the cup corals may be having some bearing.

RI then explained what his group of twelve MCS divers had done during a five-day visit to the island at the beginning of July. A wide range of tasks had been agreed with English Nature, as summarised below:

- *Deployment of data loggers on the wreck of the MV Robert and in the Landing Bay.* In 1997, two temperature/depth data loggers (of different manufacture) were positioned on the wreck of the MV *Robert*, and two were set on a mooring chain in the Landing Bay. These gathered data every 4-6 hours, one model for a maximum recording period of 10 months and the other for 5 years! Unfortunately, in May 1998, the two units attached to the mooring chain in the Landing Bay were found to be missing. However, the two on the MV *Robert* were still present. These were lifted in May, downloaded, temporarily 'parked' on the seabed in the Landing Bay for a few weeks, and then re-positioned on the MV *Robert* at the beginning of July 1998. A print-out from one of the units is attached at the end of these notes.
- *Checking the condition of sea fans Eunicella verrucosa off the east (& west) coasts and counts of the nudibranch Tritonia nilsodhneri on sea fans.* The size and condition of individual fans was noted when they were encountered on dives off both the east and west coasts. The numbers of the nudibranch *Tritonia nilsodhneri* (and/or their egg masses) on the sea fans were counted.
- *Assessing the density of 'delicate' species in near-shore areas off the east coast.* An assessment was made of the numbers of branching sponges, sea fans and Ross 'coral' within a given area, on the near-shore boulder slope off the east coast between the northern end of the Quarries and the south of Gull Rock. Counts were undertaken within 10 m x 10 m quadrats at four sites. The greatest density of the 'target' species occurred at the site closest to Gull Rock. The density of erect sponges at 13.4 – 15.2 m depth BCD, was found to be particularly high (at 21.1 individuals per 10 m²). This area also had the highest concentration of Ross 'coral' *Pentapora foliacea* (at 6.6 individuals per 10 m²).
- *Describing the sea bed topography and benthic communities to the north of Gannets' Rock.* Using Seasearch recording methodology, a steeply sloping bedrock area close inshore (known as 'Pete's Pinnacle') was mapped between Gannets' Rock and the NE point of the island. This involved describing the main seabed features and the communities present on various habitats within this area.
- *Checking for the presence of phoronid worms around the bases of cup corals at the Knoll Pins and Gannets' Rock.* Individual *Leptopsammia pruvoti* and *Caryophyllia smithii* cup corals were inspected

at these sites, noting the presence/absence of phoronids and the presence/absence of *Boscia anglica* epizootic barnacles. Infestation by both the phoronids and the barnacles appeared to be localised, being widespread in some isolated clusters of cup corals but absent from others.

- *Checking the density of scallops on muddy gravel off the east coast.* The number of scallops within a given area was assessed in order to provide some baseline information for these shellfish, which may still be taken by divers but whose capture by bottom dredging gear has been banned since 1972. Very few scallops were encountered during drift dives, but this probably indicates unsuitable substratum rather than low numbers.
- *Re-location of a 'new' Leptopsammia site on the west coast.* Sadly unsuccessful. The discovery of a number of yellow cup corals *Leptopsammia pruvoti* off the west coast in 1996 was of great interest, as it had been thought that this rare coral preferred the shelter of east coast sites. However, the exact marks of the 'new' population were not taken at the time of its discovery, and several dives in both 1997 and 1998 have failed to re-discover the site.
- *Checking the maximum depth of kelp at various sites.* The maximum depth limit of the kelp *Laminaria hyperborea* was checked at sites dived for other reasons, as a continuation of previous studies linked with turbidity measurements.
- *SEASEARCH recording of sea bed habitats from various sites – Jenny's Cove (near-shore and offshore).*
- *Searching for various 'rare' warm water species and sea horses.* None found, unfortunately.

8. Review of the MNR Zoning Scheme and Management Plan - Jo Crix: JC explained that a discussion document on this had still to appear. The review of the Management Plan had to be completed by the end of the financial year (April 1999), and, once agreed, this could affect the Zoning Scheme. She was concerned about how few divers were aware of the existence of the MNR (as was shown by LC's questionnaire), and that English Nature needs to look at further publicity. CE suggested waterproof copies of the Zoning Scheme should be available for charter boats. RW confirmed that English Nature still planned to re-issue the MNR colour booklet in a format similar to leaflets for NNRs.

9. Any other business: KB reported that the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee had recently introduced three new byelaws, to take effect from 13th September 1998. These were:

- A ban on the removal of any 'V' notched lobster
- A ban on the removal of any lobster with a carapace length less than 87mm long (from 85mm), with this minimum length increasing to 90mm in two years' time.
- A ban on the removal of any berried lobster (i.e. a female carrying eggs)

All of these byelaws applied to waters up to 6 miles offshore (and included the waters around Lundy).

RI then showed some underwater photos of the yellow cup corals *Leptopsammia pruvoti*, some of which had colonies of horseshoe worms *Phoronis* at their bases; some sea fans *Eunicella verrucosa*; assorted sea slugs; and divers fixing the temperature loggers in place on the wreck of the *Robert*. He then played a short video clip of the seabed marine life close to Gull Rock, which highlighted the large number of 'delicate' species in that vicinity.

10. Date of the next meeting: Tuesday, 13th April 1999 at 7 p.m., at Riverbank House, Bideford

Robert Irving
17 October 1998

