

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

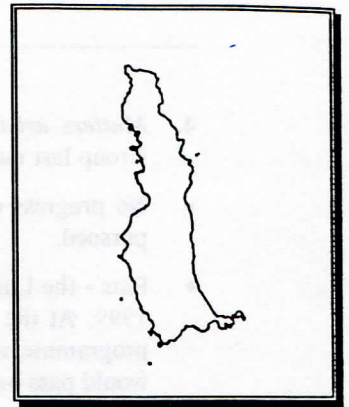
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Notes of the 10th meeting of the Advisory Group

(formerly known as the Lundy Marine Consultation Group, of which this was the 28th meeting)

held on **Tuesday, 13th April 1999** in the meeting room,
Torrige District Council Offices, Riverbank House, Bideford at 7.00 pm

Present:

Ian Knight	(IK)	Torrige District Council	Chair
Keith Bower	(KB)	Devon Sea Fisheries Committee	
Roger Covey	(RC)	English Nature (SW Marine Liaison Officer)	
Keith Hiscock	(KH)	Marine Biological Association	
Donna Sibley	(DS)	Environment Agency	
Chris Mandry	(CM)	Ilfracombe SAC & British Sub-Aqua Club (SW)	
Liza Cole	(LC)	Warden, Lundy	
Rev. Bill Blakey	(BB)	Lundy Church	
Peter Sawyer	(PS)	Charter boat, <i>Torrige Warrior</i>	
Laurie Winsborrow	(LW)	North Devon Fishermen's Co-operative	
Tim Dyer	(TD)	Ilfracombe commercial fisherman	
Clive Pearson	(CP)	Charter boat <i>Jessica Hettie</i>	
Jo Crix	(JC)	English Nature (SW SAC Officer)	
Rob Walton	(RW)	English Nature (Devon)	
Roger Hoad	(RH)	<i>M.V. Oldenburg</i>	
Robert Irving	(RI)	Lundy Field Society/Marine Conservation Society	Secretary

1. **Apologies for absence:** Apologies had been received from: Pippa Morrison (N. Devon Heritage Coast Service (VMCA)/Devon Wildlife Trust); Paul Roberts (Landmark Trust); Richard White (Devon Wildlife Trust); Mark Winsborrow (Bideford Trawlermen's Association).

2. **Notes on the last meeting, held on 13th October 1998:** These were accepted as being an accurate account of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

3. **Matters arising:** A speedier distribution of the Management Plan was requested. KH asked for the wildlife logs in the Tavern (particularly those to do with marine life and the MNR) to be placed in a prominent position.

4. **Matters arising from the Lundy MNR Management Group:** RW reported that the Management Group last met on 22nd January 1999. Matters to report included:

- No progress on possible National Nature Reserve (NNR) status for the island, but this is still being pursued.
- Rats - the Lundy Field Society debated the issue of rats/seabirds at their AGM in Exeter on 6th March 1999. At the end, a motion was carried that more research was needed before a rat extermination programme was embarked upon. KH confirmed that the LFS planned to write-up the debate, and would pass on a copy of this to Liza Cole.

RW pointed out that research into predation of manx shearwaters when in their burrows was needed. This would probably involve remote video observation at night. LW commented that he'd recently seen a TV programme about the Isles of Scilly which pointed out the presence of puffins and shearwaters, but are rats a problem there too? RW confirmed there had been problems with rats in the past - they had been controlled on Annet, but the puffins immediately left! So the results of these eradication programmes are unpredictable. It is possible that, should rats be eradicated from Lundy, they could be re-introduced by means of boats tying up to the new jetty. There seemed to be no clear answer as to why numbers of puffins on Lundy had declined so much. It could be linked to food supply, though LW pointed out that there were prolific numbers of sandeels on the fishing banks around Lundy. The island was affected by oil during WWII, and this could have had an impact on the population then. It seemed as though a population of 40,000 birds could survive such a decline, but starting with a population of just 400, it probably was not sustainable.

The conclusion to this discussion was that the Advisory Group formally ask the Management Group to look into this further, especially in seeking funding for further research.

- English Nature have now committed funding for an assistant warden during the summer months for the next 3 years. All present agreed this was excellent news. The contract between the Landmark Trust and English Nature re. the employment of the Warden was up for renewal on 30.3.99, and small revisions had been agreed.

5. **Report from the Reserve (October 1998 - April 1999) - Liza Cole:**

1. **Fishing and potting activity:** Not surprisingly, there has been very little potting activity around the Island this winter. The last pots were seen last October and the first of the season in the middle of March.

2. **Diving Activity:** There has also been very little diving activity, with only a couple of parties having come out so far this year. However, the three most regular dive boats (*Jessica Hettie*, *Lundy Murrelet* and *Torridge Warrior*) seem to be very well booked up for the coming season. The *Datchet* will not be coming out with dive parties so regularly this summer, they will be concentrating on leisure cruises around the North Devon coast.

3. **RIB:** I took my Advanced Powerboat Handling course last December which taught me, amongst other things, how to handle the RIB in rough weather (Plymouth Sound in a force 6!) and in the dark. I also investigated the various techniques that could be used for single-handed launch and recovery, but this will only be possible when the tide is the right height to use the solid jetty on the dive beach.

Inclement weather has meant that it's only been possible for me to take the RIB out once this winter to patrol the MNR.

4. **Grey Seals:** There have been sightings of grey seals all around the Island this quarter and 20 individuals were counted off the East Side from the RIB. After my experience (or lack of!) with the stranded seal pup at the start of October (reported at the last meeting), I spent a day at Gweek Seal Sanctuary with the RSPCA to learn more about the rescue and first aid of seals. So if a similar event occurs in the future I should be better able to deal with the situation.

5. **Cetaceans:** Only one sighting of cetaceans this winter: two bottle-nosed dolphins off the North End in April.

6. Seabirds: The seabirds have all now returned to the Island and are busily sorting out their pair bonds and nest sites on the west side. The first puffin was seen on the 9th April in Jenny's Cove. On 5th April a manx shearwater was found in a drain on the road by the Church and brought to me. It had a small amount of oil on its breast but, more importantly, it had broken its bottom mandible along its whole length so it was put down.

7 Unusual Marine Sightings: The only unusual sighting of the winter was of an octopus on the beach at Devil's Kitchen. It was not a big individual (c 30 cm in length including tentacles) but was certainly a first for me, I've only seen them under water before. I put it in a rock pool but it was on the beach the next morning and had to be returned to the sea again.

8. Marine litter & other pollution: The winter easterlies brought up the usual mixture of fishing net, plastic and other litter. Work on the beach road prevented access to the beach for its removal on occasions but I got rid of it when I could. Over the winter oiled birds were seen on three occasions - two razorbills and a guillemot, but only the guillemot could be caught and it was sent off to the RSPCA for treatment.

Construction work has started on the new jetty with two jack-up rigs in the bay. The contractors are all aware of the fact that they are working within a MNR and I have been monitoring their activities closely. A hydraulic pipe burst on the drilling rig, but they contained the spillage within the rig. The drilling has caused sediment to be released into the sea as expected and the movement of the resulting plume has been monitored, as have the rockpools in Devil's Kitchen. This has raised no major concerns. However, when the smaller rig collapsed on the 7th April, once it was apparent that no one had been badly hurt, there was the concern that there was the potential for a spillage of 250 gallons of diesel from the storage tanks on the rig. All the relevant authorities were contacted to try and get booms or other pollution control devices to be put into place to contain the spill if it occurred. However, it appears that nothing can be done until **after** a spill has occurred. As it turns out, no such spill has occurred to date and as soon as the relevant equipment can be got to the Island to make the rig safe, all the fuel will be pumped off the rig. Some diesel was released into the water from an undetermined source on the rig but this disappeared after two days. Various bits of flotsam came from the rig also, but these were removed from the water as soon as they washed up.

9. Interpretation: As usual, Lundy has had quite a lot of media interest. As soon as I got back to the Island after the last meeting, I had several press enquires about the rat vs. seabird controversy.

I also gave advice to an American TV company who had bought the rights to the film footage from the British Survival programme called *Lundy's Golden Mile*, which was produced in the 1980s. They were using some of the original footage and adding their own commentary for a series on unusual wildlife on and around Islands all over the world. Just before I left the Island I received a copy of the programme which is hardly what we have come to expect of British wildlife documentaries, but will raise people's awareness of the Island further afield.

The Marine Conservation Society are doing a series of articles in their magazine about important marine areas and I have written an article about Lundy. This should come out this month.

Also this winter, I have produced a commentary for playing on the *Oldenburg* as she approaches the Island, informing visitors about its wildlife importance, together with written notes for use by the Information Officer on the ship for round the Island trips.

10. Assistant Warden: This year I have been given £4000 by English Nature to employ a Seasonal Warden from the middle of May until the end of September. The Landmark Trust are providing free accommodation and travel on the *Oldenburg*. The advert for the post attracted 41 applicants, a lot of whom have previous wardening experience. I narrowed down the list to three whom I have interviewed over the last two days. Having relatively inexperienced assistants for the past two years has greatly improved the wardening of the Island, so things can only get even better with an experienced assistant. At the very least we will be able to lead many more events between the two of us.

11. Grant Projects: Since the last meeting there has been an awful lot of activity on this front.

The beach road between the Dive Beach and the Landing Beach was completed as far as possible in November. It will only be able to be finally completed when the jetty is finished.

The *Oldenburg* went into dry dock on 14th January for a complete overhaul. She has been shot-blasted top to bottom, plates replaced, been repainted, she has new engines and props, has been done out inside with new panelling and new upholstery, she has a new canopy on the top, a new exit out of the aft saloon for safety purposes and more and more and more!!!! So it's not really surprising that she's late out of dry dock. We're hoping that her first sailing out to the Island will be on the 1st May.

Work on the jetty started at the beginning of March, but there have been technical problems with the drilling for piles so this has taken longer than expected. The rig collapse hasn't helped much either, causing a further delay. However, it is still hoped that the work will be completed by the end of June.

We are starting to put some thoughts together for the new dive buildings on the beach. We hope to start work on them in October this year. Any ideas and contribution about the interpretation side especially would be most welcome.

CP asked if there was a chance the end of the jetty could be changed to allow smaller boats to come alongside - not only charter boats but also the lifeboat. He has written to MAFF about this and is awaiting a response. KB had suggested a pontoon might be appropriate, but RH pointed out this would be at risk in an easterly gale. It appeared unlikely that any modification would now be undertaken. RI asked if the generation of silt from the pile drilling was causing an obvious problem to marine life. Both RC and LC confirmed that it did not appear to be causing a problem. In retrospect, RC would like to have had the pile placement monitored more closely.

DS enquired what facilities the island had at present re. the control of a pollution incident. LC explained there was nothing. The Marine Pollution Control Unit had been consulted at the time of the rig incident, but they had said the slick was too small to do anything with and it should be left to disperse naturally. KH pointed out that a floating boom would have been a useful piece of equipment to have had for such an incident. DS agreed to investigate supplying the island with an emergency oil spill 'kit' of some sort. RH pointed out that the slick of diesel took 2 days to disperse. KH wondered if any checks had been made of the seaweeds (bleaching) or limpets (weakened limpets) in the immediate area after the spill. No.

6. & 7. Revision of the Management Plan (consultation draft) & EN Regulation 33: advice for the Lundy SAC - Jo Crix:

JC apologised for the delay in sending out the draft of the revised Management Plan (a couple of weeks before the meeting). Written comments were being requested by the end of May. A Projects Register would then be compiled with a copy of the Regulation 33 advice (this is a statutory requirement for English Nature to produce with regard to the specific nature conservation measures for the SAC). Production of the final document would be at the end of the summer.

A number of small points on the draft Management Plan were raised. The cover page mentioned 'Lundy Island' - this title is inappropriate as 'Lundy' means 'puffin island' anyway. It was recommended the word 'Island' be dropped. BB pointed out that there are, in fact, four "owners" of Lundy (p 4) - the National Trust, Trinity House, the Crown Estate *and* the Church Commissioners, who own the Church & one acre to the south of it, and the cemetery at Beacon Hill. KB pointed out that only one *annual* permit for netting has *ever* been issued (p 16). Water clarity has actually *markedly improved* in the last three years (p 50). KH thought this might be indicative of the 'Russel cycle' which predicts changes in water quality every 25 years, possibly linked with shifts in the boundary between coastal and oceanic water bodies. The ending of sewage dumping in December 1995 may also have had a bearing on this.

8. Proposed activities within the MNR this summer.


RC listed a number of activities that English Nature were involved with this summer. Firstly, the appointment of an assistant warden; a repeat of the sublittoral monitoring work at the Knoll Pins site re-established last year; the provision of a quad bike for the warden; another visit by a group of diving volunteers from the Marine Conservation Society; and possible monitoring studies of colonisation of the new jetty piles, through the Lundy Field Society.

Any other business:

- CP asked if there were plans to dig out the shale from the Divers Beach, thereby allowing craft the opportunity to come alongside the old jetty over a longer tidal cycle. LC said she was not sure if this was in the plans.
- PS asked if certain popular dive sites, such as the *Robert*, *Carmine Filomena*, *Montagu* and Gannets' Pinnacle for example, could be buoyed. LC pointed out that there were legal difficulties with this. KH added that both the *Robert* and *Montagu* were owned by Bristol Channel Divers (Don Shiers) and their/his permission would need to be sought.
- CM indicated his willingness to help LC undertake a course to use a short wave VHF radio.
- DS indicated that the Environment Agency were looking to see if the island's waste water management system fulfilled the requirements of the EC Waste Water Directive. They were contemplating undertaking water quality monitoring work around the island (as part of their obligations under the Habitats Directive). KH asked if any analysis would be done of heavy metals within organisms, as this would give more than just a one-day 'snapshot' of the water quality situation. RI said it would be useful to have some remote methods of measuring turbidity. RH admitted that the *Oldenburg* had no holding tanks for sewage and that waste was flushed straight out of the ship. It was suggested that the toilets on board should ~~not~~ be closed for the whole time that the ship was alongside the jetty.
- RW thanked RI for taking the minutes of the meeting.

10. **Date of the next meeting:** **Wednesday, 13th October 1999** at 7 p.m., at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bideford.

Robert Irving
6th October 1999


Chairman. 13/10/99.