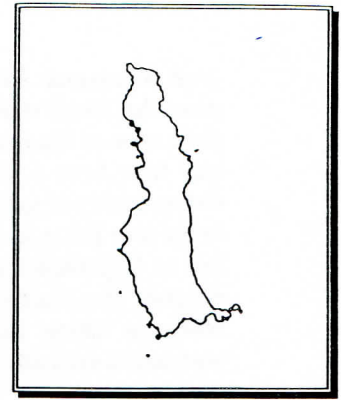


LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP



*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 12th meeting of the Advisory Group (formerly known as the Lundy Marine Consultation Group, of which this was the 30th meeting)

held on **Tuesday, 11th April 2000** in the Council Chamber,
Town Hall, Bideford at 7.00 pm

Present:

Rev. Bill Blakey	(BB)	Lundy Church	Chair
Keith Bower	(KB)	Devon Sea Fisheries Committee	
Len Hawke	(LH)	MAFF, Plymouth	
Clive Pearson	(CP)	Charter boat <i>Jessica Hettie</i>	
Hannah Streatfield	(HS)	Devon Wildlife Trust/N. Devon VMCA	
Royston Johns	(RJ)	Torrige District Council	
Laurie Winsborrow	(LW)	North Devon Fishermen's Co-operative	
Mark Winsborrow	(MW)	Bideford Trawlermen's Association	
Chris Mandry	(CM)	Ilfracombe SAC & British Sub-Aqua Club (SW)	
David Harvey	(RW)	English Nature (Devon)	
Roger Covey	(RC)	English Nature (SW Marine Liaison Officer)	
Liza Cole	(LC)	Warden, Lundy	
Keith Hiscock	(KH)	Marine Biological Association, Plymouth	
Robert Irving	(RI)	Lundy Field Society/Marine Conservation Society	Secretary

1. Apologies for absence: Apologies had been received from: Steve Waring (Royal Commission on Historic Monuments in England, & Nautical Archaeological Society); Jo Crix (English Nature, SW SAC Officer); Paul Roberts (Landmark Trust); Jerry Waller (Captain, M.V. *Oldenburg*); Richard White (Devon Wildlife Trust).

2. Notes on the last meeting, held on 13th October 1999: LW pointed out that on p3, 5th para., the missing name of the vessel was *Gilsea*.

3. Matters arising: RI said he had written to Ian Knight, former Chairman of the Group, thanking him for his contribution to the Group over the past eight years.

LW informed those present that all the fishing boats mentioned by LC in her report (p3, 5th para.) were from Ilfracombe. The skippers of these boats were unhappy with the insinuation that one of them might have been to blame for the condition of the seabed on the outer fringes of the Landing Bay, as reported by the group of divers. LW explained that these boats would have been fishing for squid, which are present in the area from June to August. The best time to fish for them is at dawn or dusk, when nets are trawled 1-2 ft above the bottom. However, as the best grounds are beyond the Stanley Bank off the east side of the island, it seems highly unlikely that the apparent 'lifeless bottom' observed by the group of divers had resulted from their fishing activities. KH pointed out that the seabed in this area (out from the Landing Bay) is mobile sediment which is periodically scoured as a result of fast-flowing currents. It is likely there would be little marine life apparent on the surface of the sand or muddy gravel, as most actually lives *within* the sediment. However, the inconspicuous communities that are present in this area include several nationally rare species which are of

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)

great importance. KB added that LC should be wary of making statements such as in the 4th para., p3: "Hence proof that illegal trawling had been taking place". It can be extremely difficult to prove such activity is taking place even at the best of times. CM added that the divers reporting the 'impoverished nature of the seabed' may have been a visiting group unfamiliar with what to expect on such a drift dive, and merely were disappointed not to have seen more life. CM regularly drift dives this area and is not aware of any disturbance to the area for at least five years. RC concluded that there had clearly been a breakdown in communication, that no local fishermen were being blamed for any untoward activity, but that better liaison between the boat skippers, dive charter skippers and the Warden would be a positive way forward. To avoid a similar situation arising in future, RC suggested that the notes of the meetings of the Advisory Group should remain confidential until after the following meeting, when any errors or misquotations could be weeded out.

KH said he had written to *Diver* magazine regarding his witnessing a dive boat anchoring on the Knoll Pins last summer (p6, para.6). His letter was published in the April 2000 issue.

5. **Matters arising from the Lundy MNR Management Group:** the Management Group last met on 3rd November 1999. RC reported on matters that were discussed at the meeting:
- Moorings - it was agreed that the charter skippers (led by Pete Sawyer/*Torridge Warrior*) should be allowed to position moorings at certain sites around the island (as mentioned at the last Advisory Group meeting). Suggested sites were Jenny's Cove and Gannets' Bay. This topic was discussed further, as indicated below.
 - Rats vs. seabirds - English Nature had met with bird interest groups (JNCC, RSPB, Lundy bird ringers & David Price (Census 2000)), to discuss options. No meeting had yet been held with rat interest groups. The idea of installing video and/or camera equipment at the entrance to shearwater or puffin burrows had now been dropped as it was thought this wouldn't necessarily prove anything. Discussions will continue...
 - Sewage discharge & waste disposal on the island. The Environment Agency had now licensed the septic tank discharge with only minor constraints. Use of the incinerator was to be stopped as was tipping down the cliff at the south end. Plans were being made for the sorting of rubbish for recycling prior to it being taken off the island and dealt with by Torridge District Council.
 - The next meeting of the Management Group is due to take place on 12th April 2000 - i.e. the day after this meeting.

Discussion on moorings. KB asked who would be responsible for the moorings, particularly from the point of view of an accident and subsequent liability. Apparently, the person setting the moorings was usually responsible. Should the buoy be marked with 'private mooring'? CM pointed out that there could be difficulties if more than one boat at a time tied up to any one buoy. CP added that the wreck of the *Robert* was buoyed each year on an informal basis, apparently without the owner's permission though he was aware this was done. CM suggested that marker buoys could be attached to various wrecks, but he would argue against mooring buoys. KH said he would be in favour of a mooring buoy at Gannets' Bay but not on the Knoll Pins. However, the difficulties regarding liability were complicated. It was left with English Nature agreeing to look into the cost of providing a single heavy permanent 'community' mooring, probably to be sited in Gannets' Bay.

6. **Report from the Reserve (October 1999 - April 2000) - Liza Cole:**

1. Assistant Warden: I am pleased to say that Ian Reach will be coming back to spend a second season on the Island as my assistant. This will be great as he already knows the job, fits in well with the Islanders and is very popular with visitors so he will certainly lighten the load. His contract this year runs from the start of May (instead of the middle) until the end of September. This means that more walks, talks and snorkels will be possible and we will be able to start monitoring puffins from May onwards and so get a better overall picture.

2. Fishing and potting activity: There has been very little potting and no trawling in the reserve this winter.

3. Diving Activity: There has been no diving in the reserve over the winter but the season is about to start with the first dive group coming out over the Easter weekend. It looks like it is going to be another busy year with at least one group of divers coming out every weekend between May and September. This year the

Jessica Hettie, Lundy Murrelet and Our Unity will be bringing divers out to the Island as usual. The *Torridge Warrior* will not be coming out, but they have passed their groups over to Anthony Glover who will be using the *Sally Port*. None of these boats has its own compressor, so the Island compressor will be working overtime.

4. RIB: After the unfortunate accident in October last year, the RIB was taken off the Island for repair as soon as we were given permission by the insurers. The engines were taken down to Plymouth and the RIB and trailer were sent back to Humber. All the repairs are now complete and all that is required now is to arrange a suitable sailing for transporting the RIB back to the Island. I am hoping to get the engines put back on the RIB at Bideford so that they can be given a test run before the RIB is transported back to the Island towards the end of this month. As soon as it gets back to the Island a safety chain will be welded onto the trailer that is long enough to be attached to the tractor whilst the telescopic hitch is extended. This will be attached before the hitch is retracted to prevent any recurrence of this unfortunate incident.

5. Grey Seals: Seals have been seen all around the Island this quarter as usual, the largest number being counted at one time was 28 hauled out at Gannets' Bay. Of the two seal pups that were born on the beach last October only one of them survived to weaning, the other one was apparently deserted and was last seen heading back into the sea alone. In February, the *Datchet* spotted a seal caught in fishing net in Gannets' Bay. They hauled it on board and managed to cut it free, then returned it to the water as it seemed to be fit and well.

6. Cetaceans: There has been only one sighting of cetaceans from the Island this winter, a small pod of harbour porpoise in the South End Race.

7. Seabirds: The seabirds have now all returned to the Island and are busy getting ready for breeding. The first puffins were seen on 31st March, two of which were checking out a burrow that was used for breeding last year. In June, David Price and a team of ornithologists will be spending a week on the Island surveying the seabirds. They will be carrying out total counts of all species and also trying to get confirmation that manx shearwaters still breed on the Island, and where. Along with this Ian and I will be continuing to monitor the puffins as we did last year. So, by the autumn we should have a fairly complete picture of the breeding seabird situation on the Island to aid the discussion concerning rats and seabirds. Also this summer, I have a student coming out to monitor the rats, to find out the relative distribution of the two species (brown & black) and to get some idea of numbers.

8. Marine litter & other pollution: As usual, the winter easterlies brought up sometimes large amounts of fishing net, plastic and other flotsam. This was removed from the beach as and when it was washed up. The fishing net [most likely to be a discarded cod end] poses the most threat to marine life as is illustrated by the incident mentioned earlier. One oiled guillemot was recovered from the beach, washed, given first aid treatment and shipped off to the RSPCA. It responded very well to the first aid and was eating furiously when it left the Island, so on this occasion it looked like all the hard work was worth it!

The designation of the reserve as a candidate SAC meant that a review of waste disposal consents had to be carried out. During this process the Environment Agency expressed concern over the disposal of sewage and rubbish on the Island and there has been much discussion over these two issues. In fact all the septic tanks and soak aways are working properly so there is no need to modify the sewage system, but great changes are needed on the rubbish front.

We will no longer be able to burn and then push the unburned material over the cliff (even though, contrary to the newspaper reports, this was having no discernible effect on the SAC), but will have to ship all the rubbish off the Island. As you can imagine this is going to be a bit of a logistical nightmare but both Paul and I are actually pleased that our hand has been forced as we were far from happy with the previous situation. We will be recycling glass, tins and paper and the rest of the waste will be shipped off in bins provided by Torridge District Council. There has been a delay with getting these bins from TDC but the first ones went over on the boat today. We have also now got two Vietnamese potbellied pigs on the Island to eat some of the organic waste. I think it is going to take a while to iron out all the potential problems (like what do we do with rotting waste when bad weather disrupts sailings, what do we do at times when the boat sails to Ilfracombe, and how do we deal with the waste produced over dry dock) but we have got the basic setup sorted out at least.

9. Raising Awareness: Over the winter I have had the usual dealings with the media, in addition to which I have done various things to try and raise people's awareness. I have written additional text for the "lundyisland" website and highlighted areas where this can be linked into the "gratton" website. This information has been passed on to David Mannering, the Island's promotions officer, who will make sure the site is amended. It has not been done as yet but I am still nagging! For your interest, Keith Denby, who set up

the "gratton" website, has bought the site name "www.lundy.co.uk", has transferred all the information from the "gratton" site onto it, and has given it to the LFS who will now maintain it.

Also this winter I started to update the wildlife information books in the properties, to make them more eye-catching and so encourage more people to look at them. I have completed all the text and just need to insert the illustrations. Plus, I have advised on the content of the new MNR leaflet; on material for inclusion on the CD Rom that is being produced for promoting the Island; and have spoken to the LFS regarding the possibility of them updating their display boards in the Church and reprinting their leaflets.

10. Grant Projects: As I mentioned at the last meeting, the jetty was completed by September last year and has already proved to be the boon that we hoped. Unfortunately, work on completing the beach road and the new slip were delayed by the atrocious weather in December which meant that we could not get the machinery and supplies over. However, work started early in the new year and both the beach road and the new slip are now complete. Work then moved onto the new beach building. The old dive huts were raised to the ground so that work could start on the foundations for the new building. The delay in the slip/road work and delay during the tendering process for the building means that the building will not be completed until September and so I will have to manage with no dive huts at all this season. This is going to be somewhat inconvenient but I will have a Portacabin sited by the main beach and will run rocky shore rambles and snorkelling from there. Also, we will have to use the trusty old compressor instead of a shiny new one with an air bank. However, the up side is that we will have much more time to work on everything, including the interpretation, and it will be something new to start the season with in 2001. Other project work that has started this winter has been footpath reparation work, so improving access to and enjoyment of the MNR. The first stretch of path to be worked on was the Battery. The job could not quite be completed with the materials and time allowed but it will be finished in the autumn. In order to carry out all the work that is necessary on the rest of the footpaths on the Island, the Landmark Trust will be employing a Footpath Warden for 4 months over the summer. The incumbent will start in June and work through to the end of September.

Liza Cole, April 2000.

CM asked if the Ilfracombe dive club could be supplied with leaflets/further information about diving around Lundy, so they could pass these on to other dive groups from outside the area. LC was happy to do this. Could the island's web site address be published through diving magazines, so that those with little knowledge of the island's diving could be directed to the web site? CM also recommended that the purchase of an oil-free compressor be considered for the island.

6. Activities occurring within the MNR this summer:

- RC explained that there would be no EN sublittoral monitoring undertaken this year. A contract was presently underway to analyse digital images of the horizontal monitoring transect at the Knoll Pins. Some trial intertidal monitoring sites were to be marked out on the west coast this summer. English Nature are preparing a new display for the beach building.
- RI informed the Group that he intended to take another group of Marine Conservation Society volunteer divers to the island again this summer. The visit would be with Anthony Glover aboard a liveboard boat, for 4 or 5 days, July 10-13/14.
- KH indicated that he was still hoping to look at the marine life which had colonised the new jetty piles. During his visit he would also plan to check several of the other monitoring sites on an informal basis.

9. Any other business:

- RC informed the Group of a recent change in English Nature's teams in the south-west. The Cornwall & Isles of Scilly team was now separate from the Devon team. A new officer was to be appointed with responsibilities for marine matters within Devon, whilst RC would concentrate on the Cornwall & IoS areas.
- RI informed the Group that Steve Waring had told him the Archaeological Diving Unit of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in England was due to visit the island towards the end of April/early May. Specifically, they were planning to check the condition of the protected wreck sites of

the *Iona II* and the Gull Rock site. John Heath had notified the relevant authorities of the damage he believed had been done to the latter site last year, and of his overall concern for the site.

- KH told the Group that the DETR had recently notified a series of 'Marine Environmental High Risk Areas' around the country. Surprisingly, both Lundy and the Isles of Scilly do not appear as sensitive with respect to seabed marine life. The Marine Biological Association had pointed this apparent omission out to the DETR.
- BB asked the Group if they would wish to be given a presentation at the next meeting of the findings of the recent National Trust Archaeological Survey of the top of the island. After due consideration it was thought that a more appropriate group to receive this would be the North Devon Archaeological Society. CM kindly gave contact details of this Society to RI.

10. Date of the next meeting: **Thursday, 19th October 2000** at 7 p.m., in the Committee Room, Torridge District Council, Riverbank House, Chanters Road, Bideford.

Robert Irving
15th May 2000


Chair 19/10/2000