

Notes of the 17th meeting of the Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group

(formerly known as the Lundy Marine Consultation Group, of which this was the 35th meeting)

held on **Thursday, 17th October 2002** in the Meeting Room,
Torridge District Council Offices, Riverbank House, Bideford at 7.00 p.m.

Present:

Keith Hiscock	(KH)	Marine Biological Association	Chairman
Clive Pearson	(CP)	Charter skipper: <i>Jessica Hettie</i> , Clovelly	
Jean-Luc Solandt	(J-LS)	Marine Conservation Society	
Sam Fanshawe	(SF)	Marine Conservation Society	
David Appleton	(DA)	English Nature (Devon Team)	
Ben Samson	(BS)	Lundy Warden	
Jenny Glanville	(JG)	Devon Wildlife Trust	
Chris Mandry	(CM)	British Sub-Aqua Club/Ilfracombe S-AC	
Chris Davis	(CD)	English Nature (Devon Team)	
Mike Williams	(MW)	Environment Agency	
Keith Bower	(KB)	Devon Sea Fisheries Committee	
Robert Irving	(RI)	Lundy Field Society & Marine Conservation Society	Secretary

1. **Apologies for absence:** Steve Waring (Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England); Len Hawke (DEFRA); Colin Eastman (*Lundy Murrelet*, Clovelly)
2. **Notes on the last meeting, held on 18th April 2002:** These were accepted as being a true record of the meeting and were signed by KH as Chairman. KH also signed the notes of the meeting held on 17th October 2001, which had been agreed (but not signed) at the meeting on 18th April 2002.
3. **Matters arising:** There were no specific matters arising, as it was felt most would be discussed during the course of the meeting.
4. **Matters arising from the last Lundy MNR Management Group meeting (held on 19 June 2002):**
 - (i) MWi reported that significant progress had been on the island in sorting out matters relating to waste management. Recycling collection facilities were now partly in place, which has made a big difference. Visitors were being asked to separate their waste into different coloured bags. The Landmark Trust has received help from various consultants on this. A compactor was due to be purchased for the island. The disposal of sewage was still not entirely sorted out, but was being dealt with.
 - (ii) DA brought the Group up to date with the current situation regarding the impact of rats on Lundy's breeding seabirds (known either as the 'seabird recovery project' or the 'rat eradication project' depending on one's point of view). This was a joint project being overseen by English Nature, the National Trust, the Landmark Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. A feasibility study had been carried out during the summer of 2001 which had concluded that rats were certainly involved to some extent in the decline in the numbers of breeding seabirds (particularly Manx shearwaters and puffins), and that it would be possible to eradicate them all from the island. Should this be done, it was predicted that the numbers of the seabird species in question would increase (albeit over a long period of time). A grid of bait stations would be set up over the whole island (at 50 m intervals), and poisoned bait would be placed in these from January to late March. By the end of April it was hoped that Lundy should be 'rat free'. A contingency plan was to be put in place to avoid re-invasion, particularly from off the *Oldenburg*.

RI asked what monitoring procedures were to be undertaken. DA said that the Warden would be checking the stations and undertaking rat counts for the last 6 weeks of the 3-month period. The National Trust also planned to monitor vegetation growth, especially

with regard to the higher proportion of seeds being present. The RSPB monitored bird numbers on the island every 6 years, but it was likely that surveys would be undertaken more frequently than this. KH asked if there would be any 'collateral' damage. DA said there might be some impact on the island's raven population. He envisaged most rats dying underground in their burrows.

5. **Report from the Reserve:** the following report was presented by Ben Samson, Lundy Warden.

My first season on the Island has proved to be a steep learning curve - busy but enjoyable.

5.1. **Assistant Warden:** On 1st July Susie Ballerstedt began as the new seasonal warden. The later start date than in recent years allowed me to get to grips with my job before taking on the extra responsibility of an assistant. Susie settled in almost immediately and was popular with both visitors and staff, being very capable, hard working and knowledgeable. Her contract ran to the end of September and with the Island still fully booked, this extra staffing was extremely useful.

5.2. **Fishing and potting activity:** There was a high level of potting activity through the spring and early summer, particularly off the north and south ends of the Island and to a lesser degree the west side. Potting boats seen include *Compass Rose II* (M78), *Walrus* (WY1), *Better Days* (CF43) and *Our Tara* (SS63), the latter seen dropping occasional strings of pots close inshore on the east side.

Two trawlers were active to the east of the reserve through May and June but it is impossible without range-finding binoculars to tell from the Island exactly where they are fishing. If the no take zone is adopted it will be even more important to be able to ascertain exactly where boats are fishing.

5.3. **Diving activity:** Atrocious weather through much of May and June meant many early season dive trips were cancelled but there was steady activity through the summer. *Jessica Hettie*, *Lundy Murrelet* and *Our Unity* were regular visitors along with *Compass Rose*, *Sharkey*, *Neptune*, *Frolic* and *Pride of Bristol*. A number of club RIBs also made the trip. Those groups that did make it over were generally very pleased with the improved facilities and from everything that I have been told, the new compressor has made my job much more pleasant!

5.4. **RIB:** The RIB has been used for 7 patrols this season, a slight increase on previous years but not as many as I would like. Launching can be a very labour intensive process and a temporary mooring made patrols around the August bank holiday far easier. A more permanent mooring will be laid for next season and a tender has already been purchased to do away with the need for lengthy swims.

5.5. **Grey Seals:** A count from the RIB in September found 74 animals, almost certainly an under-recording. The first pup was seen on Quarry Beach on 9th September. It grew rapidly for two weeks and was starting to moult when it was last seen on 22nd September. Only one other pup has been reported, on rocks along the east side on 25th September.

5.6. **Cetaceans:** There have been numerous sightings of common dolphins all around the island throughout the summer, initially in groups of about 15 from the middle of June but late August through September saw pods of around 60 individuals, both adults and calves. Bottlenosed dolphins have been seen in small numbers from the *Oldenburg* on occasion, as have harbour porpoises.

5.7. **Basking Sharks:** Other than 2 basking sharks seen on the 6th and 7th July, none were seen until 18th August, there were then steady sightings until 9th September. Total number: 36 – a very poor year.

5.8. **Seabirds:** Full counts of the seabird colony were not conducted this year and without

experience of previous seasons I cannot make anecdotal comparisons. Observations of the puffin nest sites suggest that 8 pairs bred, with Jenny's Cove and St Phillip's sites used although there was only one chick actually seen.

- 5.9. Other Marine Sightings: Numerous sunfish were seen both from the Island and from boats, far more than in previous years. A new site for the nationally scarce cup coral *Balanophyllia regia* was discovered in Devil's Kitchen with over 100 animals in a compact area. These animals were mapped and the site added to the annual cup coral survey.
- 5.10. Marine litter and other pollution: All man-made litter was removed from the Landing Beach and Devil's Kitchen as and when it was washed up. Despite this, there have been sightings of a gannet and a seal, both still alive, tangled in netting and line but out of reach of assistance. Other than this there have been no pollution incidents.
- 5.11. Interpretation: The new Dive Guide is been proving extremely popular and has done much to improve interpretation of the reserve to visiting divers. The marine interpretation centre in the beach building provides information to people landing on the *Oldenburg* and other boats and is a useful gathering point where the wardens are able to answer people's questions as they arrive. The new video is shown on the *Oldenburg* on most crossings and the Education packs have been distributed by English Nature to all schools in the area and any others visiting the Island.

Rocky shore rambles have continued to prove a very popular way of showing people the marine life of the reserve, as have the Snorkel Safaris (after taking snorkel instructor training in early July).

BBC Breakfast News recorded an interview on the Island regarding the proposed 'no take zone' which together with various press articles has got the story through to the majority of visitors, with much interest shown even if many of those believe that all fishing has been banned.

Ben Sampson, Lundy Warden

The following discussion took place after the Warden's report. RI asked what state the wetsuits used for snorkeling were in. BS replied that some could do with replacing. CD confirmed that English Nature had set aside some funds to replace old and tired wetsuits over the next 3 years. KB suggested that local wetsuit manufacturers in the South-West be approached re. sponsoring suits. CD pointed out that there was now a new display about the MNR/SAC at Ilfracombe Aquarium (which English Nature had funded). SF pointed out that reported numbers of basking sharks had been low throughout the whole of the west coast this summer. MCS has been running a sighting scheme for basking sharks for the past 15 years, with information on the MCS website (<http://www.mcsuk.org>). KH pointed out that David Sims at the MBA in Plymouth has been undertaking some tagging studies of basking sharks.

6. ***No Take Zone progress and the future of the zonation scheme***: CD informed the Group that proposals for the No Take Zone had been formalized at the last Devon Sea Fisheries Committee meeting with full support. No changes to the proposals had been necessary. KB pointed out that today (17th October) had been the last day in the period of public consultation for support or objections to be lodged. No objections had been received from the public, the fishing or the angling fraternity¹, and support had come from a number of nature conservation organizations.

¹ At the start of the meeting, Mike Mallows of the South-West Federation of Sea Anglers handed a letter to the Secretary before having to leave the meeting. The letter was read out to the Group in full at this point, and relevant sections are quoted here:

"On the subject of the No Take Zone, the South West Federation's policy is to give the proposal its support, on the proviso that it receives local support. Concern was also raised that this would be just a first step, and it was felt that an undertaking that the whole of Lundy will not be lost to the recreational fishing community should be made. ... There is very much a feeling that it's a DONE DEAL, and any form of consultation will be

The proposal would now be sent to Brussels for EC approval before being placed before the Minister for signing.

It was asked how the NTZ would be policed. KB explained that this would be tricky and would rely heavily on fellow users of the area. For boats suspected of fishing within the NTZ, the Warden would effectively have to 'catch them in the act' and be able to provide proof of their illegal activity. The DSFC have chartered the Cornwall SFC's boat to assist them with their patrols of the N. Devon coast and Lundy. The Environment Agency would also be asked to assist the policing of the NTZ with their RIB *Jack Russell*.

CD expressed his thanks on behalf of English Nature to the DSFC and other organizations for their support of the NTZ proposal.

The Zoning Scheme map would be changed to show the No Take Zone. CD asked if anyone would like to see other changes to the Zoning Scheme. One suggestion had been to put the Code of Conduct for the MNR/cSAC onto the back of a future Zoning Scheme map.

CD informed the Group that funding from English Nature was now in place to undertake a programme of monitoring for the NTZ, for an initial period of 3 years. An application for an EC grant to assist with funding was being prepared. Invitation to tender for this work would be sent out in the New Year. A contract to prepare a scoping study to assist with the design of a monitoring programme was about to be let. A number of reference/control areas would be established for comparative purposes. SF asked if all the baseline data was known for the NTZ prior to it coming into being. It would be very important to know this if any credence was to be given to subsequent monitoring studies. CD admitted that there would not be time for this. KH pointed out that this may not be too crucial taking into account natural variability and the fact that very little fishing occurred within the NTZ area at present.

English Nature's promise to Ilfracombe fishermen to fund a lobster enhancement programme would be kept, though the programme may not be at Lundy. A request had been made to EN HQ for funding such a programme in 2004/5. This would be the earliest opportunity for the Padstow hatchery to be able to provide lobster hatchlings. KH pointed out that this would allow time for the natural population to be assessed before adding the new stock. KB said that the brood stock ought to be taken from the area you wish to see enhanced.

7. **cSAC/MNR monitoring:** CD explained to the Group that English Nature had an obligation to ensure that the features of interest within the cSAC (namely the reefs, sea caves and grey seals) were monitored at least once in every 6 years. The first such monitoring would be undertaken in 2003. KH pointed out that [terrestrial] National Nature Reserves were monitored every two years, and that a lot could happen within a 6 year period! For instance, many anthozoan species (sea fans, cup corals, soft coral and anemones) have been in decline at Lundy for a number of years now, but no monitoring has been done since 1996. Should it not be more frequent? CD replied that he was trying to see if any monitoring could be undertaken at Lundy more frequently.
8. **Mooring proposals:** Continuing the discussions first raised by the Group in 1999 with regard to the positioning of a number of permanent moorings around the island (primarily for the use of dive boats), CD informed the Group that English Nature has agreed to the funding of six such moorings. It was proposed that four could be in the Landing Bay, one at Gannets' Bay and one at the Knoll Pins. The most suitable make appeared to be a 'Seaflex' mooring, best described as resembling a buoy fixed to an immovable concrete base by means of a giant rubber band. Both KH and RI indicated their surprise and alarm to hearing that one would be positioned at the Knoll Pins, particularly due to safety measures and concerns about delicate marine life present there. CM asked if there was a need for more moorings in the Landing Bay – surely it would be better to have them close to dive sites such as in Jenny's Cove, off the Battery/*Amstelstroom*, near Seal's Rock or off the Rattles. There still remained difficulties over who would be responsible for the maintenance of


meaningless.”

KB pointed out that it was now too late for this letter to be taken into consideration in the consultation process.

any such moorings and what the insurance liability implications might be for boats using these moorings. In the end, it was decided to give the matter some more thought before agreeing to the introduction of permanent moorings.

9. **Scuba Diver's Guide:** CD reported that sales of the Scuba Diver's Guide had been going well. From the sale of each book (at £5/copy), English Nature were keeping aside £3 which would be put towards projects/materials within the MNR/cSAC. Already the 'kitty' had £1300 in it. Suggestions were invited for how this money could be used – a new aquarium tank for the Beach Hut; transfer of the video onto DVD for use at the National Aquarium in Plymouth; purchase of a new TV/video for the Beach Hut; install an underwater webcam (trouble with a phone line connection) or a live video transmission; and range-finding binoculars. Both KH and RI complemented English Nature and Paul Kay (the author) on producing such a quality publication, but hoped that a number of corrections would be taken on board before the next print run.
10. **Any other business:**
- 10.1 A request was made that each member of the Advisory Group be presented with a copy of the Scuba Diver's Guide. CD said he would be happy to arrange for this to be done.
- 10.2 CM asked that the new Code of Conduct state that surface marker buoys should be used at all times within the MNR. If diving on a wreck, delayed marker buoys could be used once the divers have left the wreck. A recent incident involved two members of the Ilfracombe SAC who did not have a marker buoy being carried by the current almost a mile from off the Battery to the South End. Those providing surface cover did not know where the divers were and ended up alerting the Coastguard, who promptly sent over a helicopter. Fortunately both divers were found unharmed some time later.
- 10.3 KH raised his concern (and that of several of his colleagues) over the present state of seafans at Lundy. A recent study by the Marine Conservation Society had shown that the seafans at Lundy were in the worst state of all the seafans inspected throughout the south-west and SW Wales. Many of the seafans had succumbed to a 'die-back' of tissue along several of their branches, with the worst affected individuals being dead. KH thought this might be to do with a fungal or bacterial infection, though further research was needed to confirm this. With this in mind he had applied to the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) for a grant of £39,000, but had been turned down. He asked if English Nature could indicate their support of this project (and others like it) to NERC.
- 10.4 SF pointed out that the Marine Conservation Society was acting as the lead partner for two marine Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs): the grouped species action plan for marine turtles and the species action plan for the fan shell *Atrina fragilis*. MCS divers on the Lundy working parties (which RI has led for the past six years) have reported sighting a turtle under water at Lundy and also finding a dead *Atrina* shell.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 10th April 2003, same time (7 pm), same place (Riverbank House, Chanters Lane, Bideford).



10-4-03