

# Notes of the 18th meeting of the Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group

(formerly known as the Lundy Marine Consultation Group, of which this was the 36th meeting)

held on **Thursday, 10th April 2003** in the Meeting Room,  
Torrige District Council Offices, Riverbank House, Bideford at 7.00 p.m.

*Present:*

Keith Bower	(KB)	Devon Sea Fisheries Committee	Acting Chair
John Heath	(JH)	Historic Wreck Sites	
Barbara Haddrill	(BH)	Devon Wildlife Trust	
Clive Pearson	(CP)	Charter skipper: <i>Jessica Hettie</i> , Clovelly	
Ben Samson	(BS)	Lundy Warden	
Chris Davis	(CD)	English Nature (Devon Team)	
Chris Mandry	(CM)	British Sub-Aqua Club/Ilfracombe S-AC	
Robert Irving	(RI)	Lundy Field Society & Marine Conservation Society	Secretary

1. **Apologies for absence:** Dr Keith Hiscock (Marine Biological Association); Steve Waring (English Heritage); Len Hawke (DEFRA); Colin Eastman (*Lundy Murrelet*, Clovelly); Royston Johns (Torrige District Council); Paul Roberts (Landmark Trust/Lundy Company).
2. **Notes on the last meeting, held on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2002:** These were accepted as being a true record of the meeting and were signed by KB (who was acting as Chairman in the absence of Keith Hiscock).
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 18 October 2002):** CD informed the Group that at the last meeting of the Management Group, English Heritage and the National Trust had proposed that an overall conservation plan be written for the whole of Lundy. This would include not only cover the archaeological interest of the island but also all of the nature conservation interest, both terrestrial and marine. However, English Nature had yet to be convinced that this would be a worthwhile exercise.
5. **Report from the Reserve:** the following report was presented by Ben Samson, Lundy Warden.

This will be a brief report because of the lack of activity in the Reserve over the winter months. This doesn't mean however that things weren't moving behind the scenes and two major advances in the conservation of Lundy have come to fruition after several years of discussion: the designation of a No-Take Zone and the Seabird Recovery Project (a.k.a. the rat eradication programme), both of which will be discussed elsewhere in the meeting. The start of a winter helicopter service to the Island in January (run until the end of March) has been a great success and will resume in November with flights on Mondays and Fridays, thus effectively ending a closed season when the *Oldenburg's* was in dry dock and extending the holiday season to a full 12 months.
- 5.1. **Fishing and potting activity:** There was a small amount of angling from the jetty and Landing Beach through the winter but no commercial fishing recorded after October. With the No Take Zone now in force I am promoting it to visitors both by word of mouth and with an information sheet. There is already a good understanding of the existence and purpose of the zone amongst visitors but there is certainly a need for improved (and updated) interpretation.
- 5.2. **Grey Seals:** Animals have been seen all around the Island as usual but one unusual record is of one breaching – leaping clear of the water vertically, not something that I have come across before.

- 5.3. Seabirds: Many of the seabirds are now paired up at the nest sites and shags and gulls are on eggs. The first shearwaters have been heard at night and the first puffin has been seen at sea. These burrow-nesting birds have been given a boost after many years of declining numbers with the eradication of rats, predators of their eggs and young. At the time of writing there are somewhere around a dozen rats left and their imminent demise is anticipated. It is likely that this will have some direct impacts (albeit fairly minor) on the MNR, with intertidal invertebrates such as sea slaters losing a major predator, but the largest effect is going to be indirect, with users of the Reserve playing a role in helping to keep the Island rat free.
- 5.4. Other Marine Sightings: There are numerous large jellyfish – *Rhizostoma octopus* - around the Island at present, in what seems like an annual spring influx (they were here at the same time last year).
- 5.5. 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. Easterly winds in the run-up to Christmas helped the Island's fuel supply, washing-up several tonnes of driftwood along with much plastic. The most bizarre litter washed ashore was thousands of packs of Pamper's Wet Wipes, deck cargo fallen from a ship. For several days around the middle of March the east side of the Island was strewn with these packs, with large rafts of them just offshore. Fortunately for the Island, this coincided with a National Trust working holiday and there were plenty of hands to clear them from the more accessible places – Devil's Kitchen, the Landing Beach and even Quarry Beach. All in all, about a third of a skip full were removed, but most remained out of reach, eventually becoming someone else's problem when a change in the wind washed them back out to sea. Many of the packs were contaminated with crude oil and one dead, oiled guillemot and a few small (less than 5cm diameter) patches of oil came ashore, not a serious problem but a reminder of how vulnerable the shores of Lundy can be.
- 5.6. Media coverage: With the designation of the No-Take Zone and with the Seabird Recovery Project, Lundy and its wildlife have stayed in the news for much of the past six months. Reports of declining marine life have also made the headlines but it should be stressed that while this is of real concern and research is planned, Lundy is still a fantastic destination for divers and all those who enjoy its treasures.

*Ben Sampson, Lundy Warden*

RI suggested the Warden could take personal responsibility for the operation of the small temperature 'MiniLog' datalogger which was positioned on the wreck of the M.V. *Robert* off the east coast at a depth of 18 m below chart datum. In the past, MCS divers had recovered the logger each summer, the warden had downloaded its information onto a laptop computer, and the logger had then been re-positioned. However, this was somewhat of a precarious arrangement as there was no certainty that MCS diving groups would continue to visit the MNR on a regular basis in future. A more reliable system needed to be put in place so that the Warden could arrange its retrieval and re-positioning himself in future.<sup>1</sup>

RI also suggested that surface plankton trawls could be made by the Warden using his RIB. A repeat series of trawls could be made once a month throughout the year. Samples could be preserved and sent off to Plymouth for analysis. RI offered to discuss this possibility with Tony

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<sup>1</sup> Having checked through his records after the meeting, RI found that the data logger on the *Robert* was last retrieved by his MCS diving group in early September 2000 and downloaded onto the Warden's laptop computer. However, it was not re-positioned by the same group that retrieved it (as they ran out of time), and the (then) Warden was asked to arrange for it to be re-positioned by another group of divers. When the MCS group came to look for the logger the following year (early August 2001), it could not be found. This fact was reported to Liza Cole with the recommendation that another unit be put in its place. It is not known if this recommendation was acted upon.

John at the Sir Alister Hardy Foundation for Ocean Science in Plymouth, who was an expert on oceanic plankton and a keen LFS member.

6. **No-Take Zone: launch and monitoring studies:** The No-Take Zone (NTZ) officially came into being on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2003. A press release had been put out by English Nature at the time and a number of articles had consequently appeared. CD reported that the declaration of the NTZ had certainly raised awareness at ministerial level, with meetings taking place between Defra, CEFAS and English Nature. English Nature's local team in Exeter had commissioned Prof. Callum Roberts at the University of York (an acknowledged expert in NTZs abroad) to draw up a protocol by which the monitoring of the NTZ might be undertaken. Tenders for the monitoring work, which would be undertaken annually for an initial period of three years, had been sent out to a number of interested parties. CD stressed that these monitoring studies would be the most comprehensive of their kind in the country, hopefully producing recommendations for establishing other NTZs elsewhere in the country. There was also the intention of publishing a scientific paper after five years.

KB was impressed by the thoroughness of the document written by Prof. Roberts, but pointed out that a lot of emphasis was being placed on determining the effects of suspending fishing from the NTZ. However, very little fishing effort had been undertaken within the area in the past, so there was likely to be little change detected. CD responded by saying that the monitoring studies would be looking at comparable sites on the mainland (as well as just outside the NTZ on the island), particularly areas that were heavily potted. He agreed that it was unlikely there would be any dramatic effects of the NTZ seen.

KB also pointed out that, due to an oversight on behalf of the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee, the boundary to the NTZ (under Byelaw No. 28) would have to be 'tidied up'. This was because an earlier byelaw (No. 14b), introduced when the MNR was initially set up in 1986, allowed for netting and potting by islanders within a small rectangular area just to the north of the Landing Bay. This area was within the NTZ and so the byelaw would need to be dissolved (see accompanying map). It was hoped this could be done at the next quarterly meeting of the DSFC on 18<sup>th</sup> April. RI also pointed out that the northern boundary to the NTZ (as on maps produced by English Nature) differed from the boundary on maps produced by the DSFC. CD agreed to see this error was corrected.

7. **cSAC/MNR monitoring studies:** Monitoring of the 'reefs' within the MNR/cSAC (one of the listed features of the cSAC) is due to take place during a two week period in August this summer. Under the EU's Habitats Directive, English Nature is obliged to undertake monitoring of the listed features<sup>2</sup> of the cSAC at least once every six years. Monitoring of the reefs will be undertaken by a team of diving marine biologists who are also monitoring reef features within eight other marine cSACs in England.

RI indicated his concern that monitoring of the reefs within the cSAC would only be undertaken once every six years, the very minimum frequency that was legally required. He stressed how important it was to repeat the monitoring studies far more frequently than this, and recommended it be done every two years. Surely as the country's only Marine Nature Reserve, designated primarily on account of its subtidal reef communities, more emphasis should be placed on the monitoring of these communities. Recent adverse publicity concerning the apparent decline in Lundy's sea fan and cup coral populations (which grow on these reefs) shows how important monitoring data sets could be. Others present agreed with this proposal. CD suggested that RI write to the senior marine monitoring officer at English Nature's headquarters in Peterborough on behalf of the Advisory Group indicating the Group's collective disquiet about this situation.

8. **Mooring proposals:** CD informed the Group that £3,000 had been set aside by English Nature for the installation of moorings within the MNR/cSAC, should this be thought to be a wise thing to do. This

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<sup>2</sup> Besides reefs, the other listed features are 'subtidal sandbanks', 'sea caves' and 'grey seals'. It has not yet been decided when monitoring studies of these other features will be undertaken.

topic was first discussed by the Advisory Group in 1999, so it has been well aired. RI mentioned that in recent conversations with the Warden of the MNR at Skomer (Pembrokeshire), he was told how useful such moorings were. The Countryside Council for Wales (who manage the Skomer MNR) had set up (and maintain) a 'day mooring' over the wreck of the *Lucy* – a popular deep wreck for divers. Boats could tie-up to the buoy during daylight hours, but were not able to remain on it overnight. CCW staff checked the mooring chain at the beginning of each diving season.

CM suggested that a single mooring be placed in Gannets' Bay this year as an experiment. This would be of the 'flexible' type as recommended by CD at earlier meetings. No additional moorings were to be placed in the Landing Bay (specifically for the use by visiting dive boats or yachts), but it was thought that there should be one specifically for the Warden's RIB (which apparently did not exist at the moment). All were in agreement with this proposal.

9. **Redrafting the Zoning Scheme:** CD explained that with the introduction of the No-Take Zone, the Zoning Scheme for the MNR/cSAC would need to be revised. He asked if the Group thought it acceptable, in the light of the new NTZ and in order to help simplify the map, that the 'refuge area' be dropped. This was agreed. It was also suggested that the 'recreation zone' be extended northwards to the Sugar Loaf (thus abutting the NTZ) and eastwards to Surf Point. This was also agreed (also marked on the accompanying map).

CD explained to the Group that he would like to see a revised Code of Conduct be fixed to the back of the Zoning Scheme map, as a laminated A5-size sheet. (On reflection, there may be too much information to be displayed on a sheet of this size). CM sought reassurance that his request to see the use of SMBs by divers included in the Code of Conduct will be taken on board. CD said that it would.

KB asked if anyone knew who the Navigation Authority was for Lundy. This may have some bearing on the Recreation Zone. No one was sure who it might be – possibly Trinity House or possibly Torridge District Council. It was agreed that the Landing Bay was probably not a recognized harbour, so it may not be the local authority's responsibility.

10. **The decline in sea fans and other corals: proposed studies:** CD referred to the recent publicity there had been in the national press (e.g. the *Independent* - see attached article - and the *Daily Telegraph*, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2003) concerning the decline in number of sea fans and sunset cup corals at Lundy. He understood the concern which this publicity had created, and had spoken to Dr Keith Hiscock at the Marine Biological Association and to Dr Jason Hall-Spencer at Plymouth University about means of remedying the situation. Two proposals had been drawn up. One was to find out what was apparently attacking the sea fans and causing them to die (possibly a fungus or bacterial infection) – a project to be funded from proceeds of the 'Dive Guide' sales. The other proposal was to ask an M.Sc. student at the MBA to assess what essentials were needed by a sea fan for it to have a healthy existence and long life. This project would be undertaken using live sea fans in aquarium tanks.

11. **The seabird recovery project:** Further to BS's summary in his report of progress on the eradication of rats from the island, CD informed the Group that this one issue had caused a great deal of opposition from the general public. Over 300 letters of complaint had been received by English Nature – the most the organisation had received on any one issue of contention.

Following the point that preventing re-introduction of rats to the island would be a very high priority, KB suggested using 'rat guards' on the *Oldenburg's* mooring ropes. These were not armed personnel with instructions to shoot on sight, but rather funnel-shaped devices which prevented rats from climbing along the ropes. CD and BS said they would look into whether these would be necessary.


12. **Any other business:** The following points were raised:-

- CM asked if BS would be in a position to take weather readings on the island. CM was about to

invest in a self-contained meteorology set for about £200 which seemed to measure everything of relevance – barometric pressure, rainfall, humidity, max./min. temperatures, dew point etc. BS duly made a note of the manufacturer (Oregon Scientific/Hugger).

- KB informed the Group there were moves afoot to establish two voluntary NTZs at Lane's Ground and at Saw Tooth Ledges within Lyme Bay, after suggestions from local fishermen. A little further along the coast, Beer Home Ground had also been suggested for protection, but this was likely to prove trickier to be accepted as it was a traditional scallop ground.
- The possibility was raised about holding the next meeting of the Advisory Group in Barnstaple, so that Ilfracombe fishermen who potted around Lundy may be encouraged to attend. BH kindly agreed to enquire as to whether there would be a suitable meeting room available in the Civic Centre.

*Date of next meeting:* **Thursday 16th October 2003** at the same time (7 pm), either at Riverbank House, Chanters Lane, Bideford, or possibly at the Civic Centre, Barnstaple. Confirmation of the venue would be given when the Agenda for the next meeting is sent out at the end of September.

  
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