

LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP

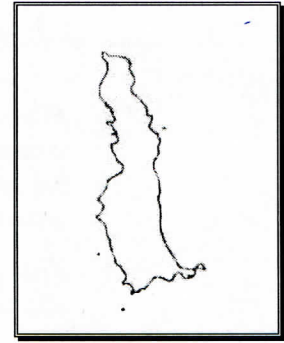
The Aims of the Group are: 1) to provide a nucleus of expertise on the marine habitats and waters surrounding Lundy; 2) to provide a forum for exchanging views on present and proposed activities around Lundy; 3) to safeguard the interests of all those who use the waters around Lundy and its natural resources;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

Established: 1985

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Notes of the 20th meeting of the Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group

(formerly known as the Lundy Marine Consultation Group, of which this was the 38th meeting)

held on **Monday, 4th October 2004** in the Council Chamber,
Town Hall, Bideford at 7.00 p.m.

Present:

Keith Hiscock	(KH)	Marine Biological Association	Chair
Clive Pearson	(CP)	Charter boat skipper <i>Jessica Hettie</i>	
Chris Mandry	(CM)	British Sub-Aqua Club/Ifracombe S-AC	
John Heath	(JH)	Historic wreck sites & Appledore SAC	
Ben Samson	(BS)	Lundy Warden	
Chris Davis	(CD)	English Nature (Devon Team)	
Mike Williams	(MW)	Environment Agency (Exeter)	
Laura Heape	(LH)	English Nature (Devon Team)	
Miles Hoskin	(MH)	MER Consultants, Falmouth	
Robert Irving	(RI)	Lundy Field Society & Marine Conservation Society	Secretary

1. **Apologies for absence:** Keith Bower (Devon Sea Fisheries Committee); Simon Brockington (English Nature, Peterborough); Steve Waring (English Heritage/marine archaeology); Paul Roberts (Lundy/Landmark Trust); Derek Green (Lundy Manager)
2. **Notes on the last meeting, held on 7th April 2004:** These were accepted as being a true record of the meeting and were signed by KH.
3. **Matters arising:** There were no specific matters arising from the last meeting which, it was considered, would not be raised later in the meeting.
4. **Matters arising from the last Lundy MNR Management Group meeting (held on 8 April 2004):** CD distributed a number of copies of the minutes of the last Management Group meeting to those present and brought the Group up to date with matters that were discussed at this meeting. These were summarised as follows:
 - **Oil spill contingency plans** – it was agreed that more information on these would be made available to the Advisory Group.
 - **Voluntary wardens** – it had been suggested that the charter skippers who visit the island regularly might be able to act as voluntary wardens. This suggestion was not considered viable due to Health & Safety implications. However, the DSFC would be providing information sheets for the skippers.

- **Monitoring studies within the MNR/cSAC** – English Nature (Devon) had hosted a meeting earlier today (4 October 2004) to discuss the best way forward with long-term plans for monitoring within the MNR/cSAC. Ben Samson, Keith Hiscock and Robert Irving attended.
- **Fish monitoring within the NTZ** – It was pointed out that a licence would be required for this activity from the DSFC.
- **Lobster enhancement programme** – a total of 1000 lobster hatchlings (35 mm long) had been released in the vicinity of Ilfracombe, as per the original agreement between English Nature and local fishermen in establishing the NTZ. Each lobster hatchling cost £3. The brood stock had come from the N. Devon/Cornwall border. It would take these individuals 4-5 years to grow to a marketable size. There had been no public announcement regarding this action.
- **A Lundy Conservation Plan** – English Nature had approved a proposal from the National Trust to put forward a Conservation Plan for the whole island and the MNR/cSAC. This would encompass all existing plans, covering nature conservation and archaeology in particular. It was suggested a representative of the National Trust may be invited to the next Advisory Group meeting in order to seek views on the Plan.

The Chair of the Advisory Group, Dr Keith Hiscock, has been invited to sit on the Management Group. In addition, the Chair of the Lundy Field Society has also been invited to sit on the Management Group.

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

5.1 Staff

- 5.1.1 Tamara Rowson began as seasonal warden on 10th May. She has been a very hard working and capable assistant, popular with the visitors. With a slightly longer contract than in previous years (22 weeks rather than 20) the Wardens have been able to run the full events programme of walks and talks through the lengthening tourist season at the same time as an increased programme of patrols of the Island and MNR.

5.2 Human Activity

- 5.2.1 **Fishing and potting activity:** Four boats have been potting regularly in the MNR – *My Tara*, *Green Isles II*, *Walrus* and *Compass Rose II*. Potting activity peaked in June and continued at a relatively low level through the summer. Pots have been laid regularly up to the northern boundary of the NTZ and on at least two occasions, within it. DSFC were informed on both occasions and spoke to the skipper involved in the first instance but because of the use of unmarked buoys the second boat could not be identified.

Trawling for squid and sole outside the protected areas continued in early summer as in previous years and several large beam trawlers used the shelter of the Island in bad weather or to repair gear, triggering several reports of illegal fishing from members of the public but I found no evidence of illegal trawling in the NTZ or Refuge Zone.

Angling from the jetty has been as popular as ever and although no fishing from the shore of the NTZ has been recorded, a very small number of boats have been found angling in the zone and requested to stop.

- 5.2.2 **Diving activity:** This year has been a complete contrast to the previous two with excellent weather in May and June getting the season started early. The weather then broke and despite plenty of fine periods there were many forced cancellations through July, August and September. I have received several reports of groups diving the wreck of the *Iona II* without a licence this year. Although this is prohibited, because of the proximity of the *Robert* it is almost impossible to tell which wreck is being dived and hence control.

- 5.2.3 **Litter:** Small amounts of litter have been washed ashore occasionally and collected. Other than two small patches of diesel on the sea there have been no reported pollution incidents.

5.3 Wildlife

- 5.3.1 **Grey Seals:** Pupping began in late August as usual but I suspect that gale force easterlies followed by storm force westerlies will have taken their toll. At least five pups were born between the Landing Beach and Rat Island but three of them died before moulting.
- 5.3.2 **Cetaceans:** There have been large numbers of common dolphins all around the island with almost daily sightings in May, June and July, but few since. A sighting of a minke whale was a highlight in July.
- 5.3.3 **Basking Sharks:** Several early sightings of small basking sharks in May and June raised hopes of a better year than last, but unfortunately none were seen since - all in all a poor year for the species at Lundy.
- 5.3.4 **Seabirds:** Puffins had a poor season with an estimated 3 or 4 burrows active at the St Phillip's Stone site only. Later in the season there were several non-breeders around with a peak count of 11 birds on land. Manx shearwaters had a better time and were heard on most nights through the spring and summer. Adults were still flying in to their burrows in early September and night searches of two of the main nesting sites on 7th and 10th September found a minimum of 10 fledglings – the first seen on Lundy for fifty years and a very encouraging sign.
- 5.3.5 **Other Marine Sightings:** Several sunfish were seen through the summer and another warm water sighting was a sponge crab, brought up in a pot off the North End by the NTZ monitoring team.
- 5.3.6 **Lundy Cabbage:** There was a good recovery of flowering plants in the southern part of the cabbage's range and the total number of flowering plants was slightly up on last year.

5.4 Environmental Protection

- 5.4.1 **Patrols:** With a less onerous rat monitoring regime and 7 days per week cover provided by the Wardens this year, patrol cover has been much higher, both from land and sea. The ex-JNCC RIB *Aplysia* was delivered in April and re-named *Lundy Warden*. This 6.5m boat has proved to be far more reliable and keeping it on a mooring for much of the season allowed it to be taken out whenever required. This increased presence on the water has been crucial in disseminating information about the MNR in a year which has seen high numbers of visiting yachts and other vessels, and enhanced protection of the NTZ.

5.5 Monitoring

- 5.5.1 **Temperature loggers:** The deep and shallow loggers were placed in April and will be replaced as required to keep a continuous data set.
- 5.5.2 **NTZ:** The survey team carried out pilot studies in May, potting surveys in July and dive surveys in September. Although this is only the first year of a longer term study, early results suggest a striking increase in large lobsters within the no take zone compared with control sites.
- 5.5.3 **cSAC:** Dive monitoring for the condition assessment of the cSAC reef features took place this summer.
- 5.5.4 **Historic Wrecks:** Wessex Archaeology completed surveys of the two protected wrecks in September.
- 5.5.5 **Seabed:** The seabed of the MNR is being mapped over the next few months by multibeam sonar as part of the MESH programme (Mapping European Seabed Habitats). This should reveal good detail of the distribution of habitat types around the Island.
- 5.5.6 **Rats:** Weekly monitoring has produced no evidence of rats – very encouraging news although the coming winter will be a critical time for looking for evidence as natural food supplies diminish.

5.6 Raising Awareness

- 5.6.1 **Review of Interpretation:** A review is underway to look all aspects of Lundy's conservation interpretation to summarise the current situation and identify any future requirements.
- 5.6.2 **Events on the Island:** The usual programme of talks, Rocky Shore Rambles, Seabird Walks, general Wildlife Walks and Snorkel Safaris have proved a popular way as ever of introducing visitors to the wildlife of the Island and MNR.
- 5.6.3 **Webcam:** The Lundy Marine Nature Reserve underwater webcam is up and running and can be accessed through the English Nature website.
- 5.6.4 **Media Interest:** Amongst other interest, BBC Radio 4 broadcast a 25 minute Living World programme on Lundy's puffins, other seabirds, rat eradication and MNR in May. One of the SW local slots in BBC One's British Isles, a Natural History was recorded on Lundy this summer, focussing on the effects of early sea level rise through cabbage, seabirds and marine life. This autumn Channel 5 feature Lundy in a programme on Britain's top 10 wild places (see if you can recognise the actors re-enacting the Thomas Benson story!).

5.7 Waste Management

- 5.7.1 The recycling centre is now up and running and all waste separated for recyclables
- 5.7.2 The rocket composter is installed and taking kitchen waste from the Tavern and from Island staff. Once the best mix of waste and shredded cardboard has been found and good quality compost being produced the scheme will be extended to organics from holiday visitors.
- 5.7.3 The slurry lagoon for taking sewage sludge and animal bedding/waste for composting is under construction.

5.8 Farm

- 5.8.1 **Grazing level:** The sheep flock has been reduced to 200+ 50 followers under the English Nature Sheep Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (Sheep WES). This reduction, combined with a cull of feral stock and rabbits should allow good recovery of the heathland and coastal grassland and disadvantage rabbits in the future.

Matters arising from Ben Samson's report

- KH asked if the Lundy website (hosted by English Nature) could be changed or modified as he had noted a number of errors or misleading information. CD confirmed that alterations could be made, but these would be done by staff at EN HQ, Peterborough. One other new part to the site would be the inclusion of a 'Warden's Page' which could be amended as and when by BS from the island.
- CM enquired about the theft of historical items from the Gull Rock protected wreck site. JH (as official licensee of the site) confirmed that a number of cannonballs and a small breechblock gun were now missing from the site (and had been for a number of years). In order to prevent any further items from disappearing, JH was keen to see all other items of interest removed from the site.

JH reported that Wessex Archaeology (who had a contract to survey all UK protected wreck sites) visited Lundy this summer. They undertook a full photographic survey of the 'Iona II' (the other protected wreck), and discovered that the wreck lay just 30 m from the wreck of the 'Robert' (the distance had always been thought to be 50-70 m!). BS reported that the Rocket Shed on the island, which had recently been converted into a Museum, may be able to display more marine archaeological artefacts.

6. **English Nature reports:**

6a Sargassum(japweed) managment: KH had recently counted 100 attached *Sargassum muticum* plants from a viewpoint on the jetty. He was anxious to ensure that the rockpools in the Devil's Kitchen (which are part of the intertidal reefs monitoring programme) remained free of this invasive non-native seaweed. It is extremely unlikely that it could be eradicated from the MNR entirely, but KH would like to see its spread kept under control (and English Nature are in agreement with this). He has suggested that BS organise a 'Sargassum hunt' before mid-May next year (when the plant's reproductive period starts) using local volunteer divers. RI confirmed that its presence on the north side of the Landing Bay had been confirmed by his group of MCS divers on 31st July 2001.

6b Pot buoy marking: Discussions were being held between English Nature and Devon Sea Fisheries Committee regarding the possible marking of pots set within the MNR/cSAC. At present there were pots within the Reserve with no markings on and therefore no way of telling to whom they belonged. CD agreed to raise this issue at the forthcoming Management Group meeting.

6c MNR sustainability assessment of the fishery: Is the current level of potting within the MNR/cSAC (outside the NTZ) sustainable? Would it be possible to undertake a stock assessment within the rest of the MNR/cSAC? KH asked if any potting for crayfish was undertaken and, in the absence of Keith Bower of DSFC, it was thought that only tangle netting for crayfish took place.

6d Lundy seabed mapping progress: English Nature had issued a contract to Hydrosurveys to undertake a high definition side-scan survey of the seabed within the MNR/cSAC. This would highlight seabed features and provide bathymetric data too. KH asked what was the point of this survey. CD explained that it was part of JNCC's MESH programme (a Europe-wide seabed mapping project) and Lundy had been chosen as a small site where a high level of mapping detail could be achieved. BS asked if a 3-D animation may be possible utilising the bathymetric data (as had been created at Skomer), but CD thought this unlikely.

6e Interpretation Review: This is being proposed by Landmark Trust and is covered in the Warden's Report.

6f Literature Review: English Nature had let a contract to Sea-Scope (Robert Irving) to undertake a literature review relating to marine studies carried out around the island. Specifically, the review was intended to assess what, if any, of the information acquired so far could be used as baseline data for monitoring of the intertidal and subtidal reefs, subtidal sediment areas, sea caves and grey seals (all cSAC 'features'). The review would be completed early in the new year.

6g cSAC monitoring update: This would be reported on at the next meeting of the Advisory Group. The contractors (ASM Ltd) did complete all of the survey work this summer. As mentioned above, a meeting to discuss further monitoring requirements was held earlier today at English Nature's offices in Exeter.

6h No Take Zone monitoring update: This item is covered under item 7 below.

7. **No Take Zone monitoring update:** Dr Miles Hoskin from MER Consultants gave a short illustrated presentation to the Group on the NTZ monitoring programme and the results of the first year'

The project was funded by English Nature, Defra and WWF-UK and was supported by staff from the University of Plymouth (Ross Coleman) and the Marine Biological Association (Keith Hiscock). There were two main parts to the monitoring. Firstly, the effects of the NTZ on commercial species (i.e. lobster, brown/edible crab, spider crab, velvet crab and scallop); and secondly, the effect on long-lived sessile biota on rock habitats, such as sea fans, erect sponges, Ross 'coral' and the soft coral

dead man's fingers.

Incorporated within the design of the programme were a number of control or reference sites, to allow comparisons to be made from 'fished' and 'non-fished' areas. For scallops, counts were being made inside and outside the NTZ boundary, whereas for lobsters and crabs the control areas were elsewhere on Lundy, on the N. Devon coast (Hartland Point) and on the S. Wales coast (Solva).

Results from Year 1 showed that the number of landable-sized lobsters caught within the NTZ was 3 times as great as those caught from the Lundy control sites, and also at Hartland Point and at Solva. Most of those caught were 'quite big'. Not all of the diving studies had been completed and it was hoped to return to complete these before the end of October. Unfinished studies included scallop counts and an assessment of sessile fauna on the west coast.

RI asked if the monitoring studies would continue after two years (when current funding ends). CD confirmed he was hopeful that it would. Defra were being supportive 'at the highest level'. MH explained that for the results to be statistically valid, 4-5 years' worth of data would be required.

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

- CD pointed out that the terms of reference of the Management Group had recently been revised and now included all terrestrial matters (as well as marine).

Date of next meeting: Thursday, 21st April 2005 [note that this was later changed to **Wednesday, 20th April**] to be held at 7.00 pm in Torridge District Council Offices, Riverbank House, Chanters Lane, Bideford.

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20/4/05