

LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP

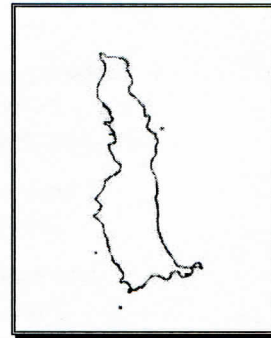
The Aims of the Group are: 1) to provide a nucleus of expertise on the marine habitats and waters surrounding Lundy; 2) to provide a forum for exchanging views on present and proposed activities around Lundy; 3) to safeguard the interests of all those who use the waters around Lundy and its natural resources;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

Established: 1985

Please reply to the Hon. Secretary:

Mr Robert Irving
Combe Lodge
Bampton
Devon EX16 9LB

Tel. 01398 332267
Mob. 07713 114006
e-mail: Robert@sea-scope.co.uk



Notes of the 21st meeting of the Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group

(formerly known as the Lundy Marine Consultation Group, of which this was the 39th meeting)

held on **Wednesday, 20th April 2005** in the Committee Room,
Riverbank House, Chanters Road, Bideford at 7.00 p.m.

Present:

Keith Hiscock	(KH)	Marine Biological Association	Chair
Keith Bower	(KB)	Devon Sea Fisheries Committee	
Mike Williams	(MW)	Environment Agency (Exeter)	
Derek Green *	(DG)	Lundy General Manager	
Laura Heape	(LH)	English Nature (Devon Team)	
Ben Samson	(BS)	Lundy Warden	
Chris Mandry	(CM)	British Sub-Aqua Club/Ilfracombe S-AC	
Steve Corcoran *	(SC)	Ilfracombe Aquarium	
Lawrence Raybone *	(LR)	Manager, Ilfracombe Aquarium	
Leigh Hanks *	(LH)	Obsession Charters	
Andrew Benguey *	(ABY)	Obsession Charters	
Andy Bell *	(ABI)	North Devon Coast & Countryside Service	
Robert Irving	(RI)	Lundy Field Society & Marine Conservation Society	Secretary

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, especially those (*) for whom this was their first meeting.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Chris Davis (English Nature, Devon Team); Steve Waring (English Heritage/marine archaeology – Steve will be unable to attend further meetings due to a change in jobs); Phil Whitby (Defra, Plymouth); John Heath (marine archaeological interests); Clive Pearson (*Jessica Hettie* charter boat).
2. **Notes on the last meeting, held on 4th October 2004:** These were accepted as being a true record of the meeting and were signed by KH.
3. **Matters arising:** CM asked if any progress had been made regarding the ownership of the various moorings in the Landing Bay (this matter had arisen in a previous meeting). BS replied that he had this on his list of 'things to do' and would be progressing the matter shortly.
4. **Matters arising from the last Lundy MNR Management Group meeting (held on 15th October 2004):** Unfortunately, none of the assembled company had been present at the

The following organisations sit on the Advisory Group: British Sub-Aqua Club * Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs * Devon Sea Fisheries Committee * Devon Wildlife Trust * English Nature * Environment Agency * Landmark Trust * local dive charter interests * local diving clubs * local sea fishing interests * The Lundy Company Ltd. * Lundy Field Society * Marine Archaeological Interests * Marine Biological Association of the U.K. * Marine Conservation Society * National Trust * Northern Devon Coast and Countryside Service * South-West Federation of Sea Anglers * Torridge District Council * Worldwide Fund for Nature (UK)

last Management Group meeting, and so no comment was possible on any of the matters arising from it. However, the Hon. Secretary was sent a copy of the minutes, and the following points were covered/decided upon:

- It was suggested that the Warden's Report (as included in these Notes and also presented to the Management Group) could be posted on the web site.
- The National Trust had contracted Land Use Consultants to draw up a 'Conservation Plan' for the whole island and the MNR. The purpose of the plan is to integrate the present plans for the island and develop a philosophy for land use decisions, to cover the next 20 years or so. It should also help for all the interest groups to communicate. The plan would lead to an implementation of policies. The use of the concept of favourable condition for all aspects of the island is being proposed. It is proposed to divide the island up into a variety of layers. The geographical scope will need to include MNR boundary. Resources will need to include fisheries. A draft document will go out to consultation, with a completed plan due by the middle of 2005.
- The Management Group at present does not have any Terms of Reference, and English Nature would like to see some drawn up. Whilst the Advisory Group is focussed on marine issues, the Management Group will include all aspects of the terrestrial side of the island as well as the marine side. It was proposed to invite a representative from the Lundy Field Society to future meetings (Roger Chapple, Chairman), and one from the RSPB.
- An agreement had been signed between the Lundy Company/Landmark and English Nature to reduce the grazing stock on the island, including both domestic and wild stock, as part of a Wildlife Enhancement Scheme. (See Warden's Report later for more information on this).
- The next meeting of the Management Group will take place on 22 April 2005.

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

The pattern of visitors through the winter followed the pattern of last year, with the Oldenburg service being replaced by twice weekly helicopters between the end of October and late March. There were no visitors for the first three weeks of January, with the properties shut for maintenance. In February I successfully completed PADI Divemaster training to allow my involvement in professional diving based studies of the MNR.

5.1 Human Activity

- 5.1.1 Fishing: Other than sporadic angling from the Island there has not been any fishing recorded in the MNR between November and March. The first pots of the spring were laid on April 2nd and there has been a low level of potting continuing since then.
- 5.1.2 Diving: With an early Easter there have been no dive visits so far this year (other than the Sargassum bash (see below).
- 5.1.3 Marine litter and other pollution: Small amounts of litter washed ashore and were removed. No oil has been reported this winter but one moderately oiled guillemot and one shag were found dead.

5.2 Wildlife

- 5.2.1 Grey Seals: One late pup was successfully raised on the Landing Beach in late October.
- 5.2.2 Cetaceans: There have been occasional reports of harbour porpoises through the winter.

5.3 Environmental Protection

- 5.3.1 Sargassum: Ilfracombe Sub-Aqua Club brought out 10 divers on 10th April to remove pre-reproductive *Sargassum* from around the jetty area. Although all *Sargassum* plants found were removed, some will have been missed along the low water mark and a significant quantity of *Cystoseira humilis* var *myriophylloides* was also removed accidentally.
- 5.3.2 Patrols: The Island was patrolled at least weekly from land through the winter during rat monitoring.

5.4 Monitoring

- 5.4.1 Rats: Weekly monitoring has produced no evidence of rats – it is now over a year since the last rat sign on Lundy. Monitoring is continuing but now on a fortnightly basis and bait in the long term monitoring stations has been replaced with wax blocks and soap which are more durable and show sign of gnawing more clearly.

5.5 Raising Awareness

- 5.5.1 Bird Leaflet: A new leaflet focusing on the birds of Lundy is in production and will be available shortly.
- 5.5.2 Events on the Island: The usual programme of talks and Wildlife Walks have proved a popular way as ever of introducing visitors to the wildlife of the Island and MNR through the winter months with winter talks being held in the new Tavern Restaurant rather the cold, draughty church.
- 5.5.3 Webcam: The Lundy Marine Nature Reserve underwater webcam has survived the winter storms and is still online on English Nature's website.

5.6 Terrestrial

- 5.6.1 Feral mammal cull: There was a full cull this winter to control the feral stock in line with the reduction in the domestic flock. A total of 28 goats, 42 soay and 17 sika were killed, all suitable carcasses were used by the Tavern. Over 4500 rabbits have also been killed, mainly by shooting but numbers still appear to be increasing.

Ben Sampson, Lundy Warden

[Postscript: on 21st April, Charles Kilgour was appointed as seasonal warden for this summer. He will be taking up the post in mid May, date to be confirmed.]

6. English Nature reports (presented by Laura Heape):

It is now official! The Special Area of Conservation (SAC) has now formerly been recognised by the powers that be and no longer needs to be referred to as a 'candidate' SAC. The following topics were introduced by LH, with short summaries of the discussions which followed each.

6a SAC reef monitoring – initial results: There had been some delay in the write-up of the fieldwork undertaken by ASM Consultants Ltd. in 2003 and 2004, so results from the initial monitoring programme are not yet available. English Nature (Peterborough) are now expecting to receive a report in July 2005.

KH expressed his disappointment at the delay in seeing the results of the reef monitoring studies. He also expressed his view that the methods used in the standard monitoring protocol (as used for other marine SAC sites in England featuring reefs) would not provide the information that would indicate whether 'favourable conservation status' was being maintained. The 'one size fits all' approach would not necessarily detect changes at Lundy. In his opinion, the monitoring sites established in 1984 should be re-surveyed and that a view on the 'quality' of marine life should not rely on observations made on recreational dives (by KH himself)! He believes the monitoring studies should be able to indicate when there's an 'upturn' in the overall health of the marine life at Lundy, particularly in the sea anemones and corals. MW pointed out that, as with the statutory

monitoring the Environment Agency has to undertake, English Nature have limited funds at their disposal for monitoring programmes. There was a case, though, that as Lundy was England's only MNR, special provision should be made for adequate monitoring to be carried out.

6b Update of NTZ monitoring: A continuation of the monitoring studies is being planned for this summer.

RI asked if Miles Hoskin (of MER Consultants) had managed to get out to the island last October to complete the summer's survey work as planned, but it was thought he hadn't. With regard to the counting of scallops for the NTZ monitoring, KH reported that timed searches for scallops relied on the very different observational skills of the surveyors and that a better method had been devised which used two divers progressing a 4m long pole over the seabed and counting all scallops in the resulting belt transect. The speed of undertaking the quadrat assessments for the sponge and seafan studies was rather slow and only allowed 4-5 quadrats to be assessed during one dive. To be statistically valid, the results from as many as 70 quadrats were needed! BS asked if sports divers could help with the monitoring in some way, but it was thought this could raise more problems than solve. KH thought that sports divers could well help with taking repeatable viewpoint photographs under water, but this would require repeat visits to exactly the same spot by the same individual. He also reiterated the call for divers to report unusual sightings or general observations to his organisation *MarLIN* in Plymouth, on the 24hr answerphone, as part of the 'Sealife Signpost' project. It was hoped that charter boat skippers would encourage divers to make such records.

6c Pot buoy marking: This matter was raised at the last meeting of the Advisory Group. BS had had difficulty identifying some unmarked pots which had been set within the northern boundary of the NTZ. KB explained that *all* pot buoys had to be 'marked' by law beyond the 12 mile limit, but that it was unclear as to what exactly this meant. Did it just mean they had to be visible, or did it mean they had to be identifiable to a particular vessel? KB thought the way forward on this was for him to speak to those fishermen from Ilfracombe who were likely to place pots around the island and explain to them that they should be clearly marked with a vessel ID.

On a related issue, KB went on to explain that potting for whelks was becoming favoured by many Devon fishermen who had traditionally been catching crabs and lobsters. Apparently there is a good market for whelks (they are mostly exported to Korea), they are 'easier' to catch and weight for weight they fetch a comparable price to lobsters. This interest could well lead to a reduction in the number of crab/lobster pots set around the island within the MNR/SAC. Both KH and RI considered there would be few whelks present within the MNR/SAC. LH raised the matter of the possible implications of a new EU Directive, following the outcome of a recent test case in Holland. KB explained to the rest of the Group that any 'new' fishing method would now require a full Environmental Impact Assessment to be carried out, as the fishery could be classed as a new 'plan' or 'project'. However, the implications of this new ruling are as yet unclear.

6d Lundy seabed mapping progress: English Nature had contracted Hydrosurveys to undertake a high definition side-scan survey of the seabed within the MNR/cSAC in 2004. However, due to poor weather during the survey period, it is now planned to complete the work in June this year.

6e Interpretation Review: With assistance from English Nature, Ben Samson and his assistant warden last year Tamara Rowson have completed a review of all the interpretive materials produced for the island in order to see where there were gaps in their coverage, and to develop a plan for producing more materials over the next five years. The main conclusion of the review was that the series of 2-colour leaflets

produced by English Nature 5 (or so) years ago were now out of date. A new set of leaflets would be produced which would cover the MNR/SAC Zoning Scheme; seabirds; coastal walks (x2) and seashore life. Electronic copies of the review are available from BS as an Excel spreadsheet.

AB pointed out that he was currently compiling an interpretation strategy for the whole of the north Devon area (which included Lundy), and would be submitting it to the Heritage Lottery Fund for possible funding. It was suggested that BS could liaise directly with AB about this.

KH pointed out that the Lundy Field Society was celebrating its 60th birthday next year and it was proposed to hold an 'event' (probably along the lines of a one-day conference) which would encompass some of the research which had taken place on the island over this period of time, including historical studies, archaeological, marine biological etc.. AB suggested the North Devon Festival, which ran for four weeks during June/July, might be an appropriate 'umbrella event' for it.

6f Literature Review: LH thanked Robert Irving (of Sea-Scope, Marine Environmental Consultants) for completing the commissioned literature review relating to the various marine studies carried out around the island over the years. (A copy of the report was passed around the table). 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, the subtidal sediment areas, the sea caves and the grey seals (all cSAC 'features'). Copies of the review could be made available by English Nature to anyone with a particular interest in the subject.

6g Lundy 'Seaflex' mooring progress: This had been rather slow. A 'day' mooring had been donated by the manufacturing company in Sweden and was presently being stored in Anthony Glover's yard in Appledore, prior to it being taken over to the island on board the *Datchet*. English Nature are awaiting the design from Sweden of the 2 tonne concrete 'stepped' block. A delay has arisen due to the UK Agents no longer dealing with the Seaflex company in Sweden. It is hoped that the mooring will be in place by the end of May.

7. Planned research projects/activities in 2005 (including Sargassum management):

7a Sargassum management: Further to the mention in BS's report, a few comments were made about the planned management of the 'non-native & invasive' brown seaweed *Sargassum muticum*, otherwise known as 'japweed' or 'wireweed'. The best time to attempt to collect plants would be as late in the spring/early summer as possible, but before about mid-May when it is thought the plants start to reproduce. The intention is to make sure the plants do not become established in the rockpools within the Devil's Kitchen. Currently they are mostly present in the area to the east of the jetty, between the jetty and Hell's Gates. KH pointed out that unpublished studies he knew about had shown rockpool communities are able to 'adapt' to the presence of the invasive weed.

7b NTZ monitoring studies: The NTZ monitoring team will be visiting the island again this summer to repeat the potting and diving work. Two visits are planned.

7c Seasearch weekend survey: The National Seasearch Co-ordinator, Chris Wood, was taking a group of MCS divers over to the island on 9/10 July aboard *Obsession*, to repeat the pink sea fan survey (last carried out in 2001). In addition, some Seasearch seabed habitat recording would be carried out. KH pointed out that the area around the Battery off the west coast was where seafans had appeared in good condition, whilst those off the NE coast (north of Gannets' Rock) had been in the worst condition.

7d Sunset cup coral studies: RI was hoping to visit the island some time over the summer with a small group of divers to continue his counts of the sunset cup coral. This project would depend upon a grant application currently with English Nature. In addition

to the Lundy population, he was proposing to undertake comparative studies of other sunset cup coral populations in the south-west.

7e Survey of intertidal gastropod molluscs and barnacles: Prof. Steve Hawkins of the Marine Biological Association in Plymouth was planning to repeat a survey he and KH undertook in the mid 1980s on Lundy this summer. RI reminded KH that a licence from English Nature would be required if any specimens were to be collected.

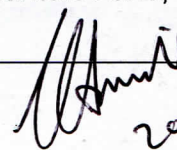
7f Research projects: BS informed the Group that he had heard from two individuals (from Plymouth and Portsmouth Universities respectively) who were planning to undertake M.Sc. research projects looking at the socio-economic benefits of the No Take Zone.

8. Review of recreational activities: KH asked which charter boats now regularly visited the island. There is one based in Ilfracombe (*Obsession*) and two at Clovelly (*Jessica Hettie* and *Lundy Murrelet*). Various diving club RIBs are driven out to the island from the mainland, mostly at weekends. If no-one from these boats lands on the island, BS can find it difficult to make contact with them all and to inform them of the MNR/SAC's regulations. A new Information Board was planned for the jetty/beach building, which should help disseminate information. CM wondered if it would be cost-effective to include an insert, or possibly an article, in the Diving press. The RNLI lifeboat house at Ilfracombe and/or the Ilfracombe Harbour Master might also be appropriate places to house information hand-outs. AB mentioned that the County Council-funded 'Discover Devon Naturally' project may well have funds to help promote diving around Devon.

9. Any other business: The following points were raised:-

- CM asked if there was any news regarding the possibility of aggregate dredging happening within the Bristol Channel. Some time ago there had been an environmental impact assessment (EIA) study undertaken, but since then it had all gone quiet. KB replied that as far as he knows there are still plans to extract gravel from two or three locations. One of the potential threats, as far as Lundy was concerned, would be 'downstream turbidity', but it was felt the background suspended sediment load was already pretty high! KB informed the Group that there was a 364-day flushing period for silt in the upper Bristol Channel – in other words, it takes a full year for any one particle to be flushed out of the system. One worrying thing, though, was that the extraction companies themselves funded the cost of any EIA, which might therefore be interpreted as being biased in their favour.
- CM informed the Group that he can arrange for instruction for a VHF DSC radio operator's licence for anyone interested.
- LR asked about plastic beach litter on the coastline around Ilfracombe, and whether the amounts this winter were 'typical'. BS replied that it very much depended on wind direction – NE winds bring most litter on to the east coast of Lundy. KB pointed out that 5-6 years ago there had been a big problem with shredded plastic from the S. Wales coast clogging up fishing gear, but this now seemed to have stopped. KH suggested LR contact the Marine Conservation Society's Beach Litter Officer.
- RI stated he was pleased that the Chairman of the Lundy Field Society had been invited to attend future meetings of the Management Group.
- RI, in his capacity as Hon. Sec., asked if anyone knew of suitable contacts for the yachting and fishing fraternities, as these were often poorly represented on the Advisory Group. It was suggested he make contact with the N. Devon Yacht Club, the Ilfracombe Yacht Club and the Watermouth Yacht Club. Dick Talbot and Nick Fox should also be invited to attend on behalf of commercial fishermen.

10. Date of next meeting: Thursday, 20th October 2005 to be held at 7.00 pm in Torridge District Council's Committee Room, Riverbank House, Chanters Lane, Bideford.


20/10/05