

LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP

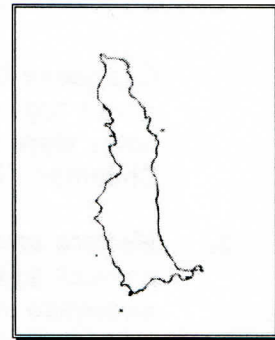
The Aims of the Group are: 1) to provide a nucleus of expertise on the marine habitats and waters surrounding Lundy; 2) to provide a forum for exchanging views on present and proposed activities around Lundy; 3) to safeguard the interests of all those who use the waters around Lundy and its natural resources;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

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 22nd meeting of the Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group

(formerly known as the Lundy Marine Consultation Group, of which this was the 40th meeting)

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

Present:

Keith Hiscock	(KH)	Marine Biological Association	Chair
Andrew Bengey *	(ABy)	Obsession Charters	
Keith Denby	(KD)	Ilfracombe Sub-Aqua Club	
Margaret Ashton	(MA)	Ilfracombe Sub-Aqua Club	
Mark Dunkley	(MD)*	English Heritage	
Mike Williams	(MWI)	Environment Agency (Exeter)	
Chris Wills	(CW)*	Clovelly Inshore Fishermen's Association / Bideford Trawlermen's Co-operative	
Colin Eastman	(CE)	Lundy Charters	
Mark Winsborrow	(MWn)	Bideford Trawlermen's Co-operative	
Chris Mandry	(CM)	British Sub-Aqua Club/Ilfracombe S-AC	
Mike Deaton	(MD)*	Appledore Sub-Aqua Club	
Derek Green *	(DG)	Lundy General Manager	
Clive Pearson	(CP)	Charter Skipper <i>Jessica Hettie</i>	
Laura Heape	(LH)	English Nature (Devon Team)	
Charles Kilgour	(CK)*	Assistant Lundy Warden	
Ben Samson	(BS)	Lundy Warden	
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:** Apologies had been received from: Royston Johns (Torridge District Council), Chris Davis (English Nature, Devon Team); and Samantha Fanshawe (Marine Conservation Society).
2. **Notes on the last meeting, held on 20th April 2005:** CM asked that the wording in section 5.3.1. of the Warden's Report be altered to show that the removal of the

Cystoseira humilis seaweed plants was not the fault of the divers but as a result of poor advice regarding the correct identification of *Sargassum muticum* plants. Otherwise, the notes were accepted as being a true record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman KH.

3. **Matters arising:** Section 4 - BS informed the Group that there had been a delay in producing the 'Conservation Plan' by Land Use Consultants but that a draft was due to be discussed at the Management Group meeting tomorrow (21st October). The Plan is now being referred to as a 'Conservation Framework'.

Section 3 – BS intends to draw up a licence agreement for the owners of the moorings in the Landing Bay. He already knows which moorings belong to who, and needs to indicate this on a map. English Nature have to license the moorings within the SAC.

Section 7d – RI informed the Group that his planned survey of sunset cup corals did not take place this summer due to lack of available time. However, he is hopeful that English Nature may be able to fund a visit next year.

Section 7e – KH informed the Group that Prof. Steve Hawkins' proposed visit to the island to re-survey intertidal gastropods also did not take place due to lack of available time. However, KH undertook his own limited survey of the toothed topshell *Osilinus (Monodonta) lineata* around the Landing Bay and found there to be an average of 1.9/m². He said the distribution of this snail had extended 100 km eastwards along the coast of the English Channel since 1980, which was probably a direct indication of climate change.

Section 7f – BS informed the Group that Alison Little from Plymouth University had been over to the island on more than one occasion this summer to undertake research for her M.Sc thesis but that he had yet to see the finished work. He was also aware that a student from Portsmouth University had been handing out questionnaires on the *Oldenburg*, but hadn't heard anything more about this.

Section 9 – KH mentioned that it was certain that there would be aggregate extraction licences issued for the Bristol Channel at some time in the future, but that the likely impact of such works on Lundy's waters would be minimal given the very high background suspended sediment load in the Bristol Channel and the distance away from Lundy that extraction was proposed. RI explained that he now had contact details for the three sailing clubs mentioned at the last meeting, and would be inviting representatives to attend the next meeting of the Advisory Group.

4. **Matters arising from the last Lundy MNR Management Group meeting (held on 21st April 2005):** It was considered that there were no specific issues to be raised here which would not be covered elsewhere on the Agenda. The next meeting of the Management Group will take place on 21 October 2005.

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

Warden's Report (April – October 2005)

5.1 Staff

- 5.1.1 Charlie Kilgour joined the Island staff as seasonal warden on 21st May. With a background in both marine biology and terrestrial conservation he has been a valuable asset to the conservation team and I am pleased to say that thanks to funding from English Nature we have been able to keep him on through the winter months. This will mean that we can increase the number of patrols of the Marine Nature Reserve (MNR) at a neglected time of year, offer a more substantial programme of walks and talks through the increasingly popular helicopter season, produce a much needed communication strategy for the reserve and of course, provide cover for the warden when he is on leave.

(a socio-economic evaluation of the NTZ)

- 5.3.3 **Basking Sharks:** 2005 has been a good summer for shark sightings, with one shoal of at least 20 animals seen just south of the Island and numerous other records in June, July, August and September.
- 5.3.4 **Seabirds:** Puffins had a similar year to 2004, with 5 or 6 burrows active, all at the St Phillip's Stone site. The exciting news though is that a baby puffin was seen in the entrance of a burrow in early July. This is the first recorded puffin chick on record, there hasn't even been any evidence of any chicks since 1973 and although it will take many years for numbers to begin to build up, this is an encouraging start now that rats are gone. 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 in late August and early September found several fledglings although attempts to assess what proportion of nests succeeded to fledge young failed to draw any conclusions.
- 5.3.5 **Lundy Cabbage:** 2005 gave the second highest number of plants in flower on record. The success of the Lundy cabbage was matched by most flowering plants, making the most of steady rainfall throughout the growing season meaning that the Island has looked far more lush this summer than it has for many years.

5.4 Environmental Protection

- 5.4.1 **Patrols:** Patrols of the MNR have been maintained at a high level again this year although serious problems with the trailer for the patrol boat led to significant delays in getting it off for a service and until August the reserve was patrolled solely from the shore. Both boat and trailer are now up and running and with the slipway onto the beach deteriorating rapidly, and the main slipway unuseable, the RIB is being kept alongside the Beach Building and can be launched and recovered on the jetty at high tide.

5.5 Monitoring

- 5.5.1 **Temperature loggers:** ILFSAC placed the logger on the Robert in May but failed to find the old logger. It will be necessary to recover both, download data and then relaunch as soon as possible if we are to have a continual dataset through the winter. With no spare logger available at present, the jetty instrument has not be replaced but will have to be recovered, downloaded and relaunched before the winter.
- 5.5.2 **NTZ:** The survey team returned for both dive and potting surveys this summer and the striking increase in large lobsters within the NTZ has continued to be evident although I haven't seen any other results at present.
- 5.5.3 **Seabed:** The seabed of the MNR has been by multibeam sonar as part of the MESH programme (Mapping European Seabed Habitats). The level of detail is excellent, with very small features being distinguishable.
- 5.5.4 **Rats:** With Lundy showing no sign of rats for over a year monitoring has been stepped down slightly, with fortnightly checks of the long term stations producing no evidence of rats. A team of four experts will set out monitoring stations right across the Island this winter before we can officially declare Lundy Europe's largest rat free Island.

5.6 Raising Awareness

- 5.6.1 **Review of Interpretation:** last year's interpretation review is being developed into a Communication Strategy for the Marine Nature Reserve, led by Charlie Kilgour. This will be a long-term plan for getting the key messages about conservation of the area out to

the relevant audiences.

- 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 and will continue through the winter months.
- 5.6.3 **Beach Building:** A mobile display on the pink sea fan on loan from the Marine Conservation Society has highlighted how drab and uninviting the permanent displays are in the beach building. This has been remedied in part by installing an LCD screen to play the MNR DVD when visitors are arriving and waiting to board prior to departure, and will be used to screen live shots from the underwater webcam when sea conditions are favourable.
- 5.6.4 **Media Interest:** There has been a huge media interest in the Island's conservation this summer, even by Lundy's standards. The NTZ survey team hosted a highly successful press day, an idea that we could repeat in the future, perhaps with another focus. Among other highlights were pieces within BBC's Coast series, Channel 5's Top Ten Natural Wonders and BBC Radio 4's You and Yours programme looking at marine conservation legislation and the proposed Marine Bill.

Ben Sampson, Lundy Warden

[Hon Sec: Please note that at the Management Group meeting which took place the day after the Advisory Group meeting, Ben Samson announced he would be leaving Lundy at the end of January 2006 in order to take up the post of Warden on Aride Island in the Seychelles!]

The following discussion points were raised at the end of the Warden's Report:

KH felt that the increase in sediment reported by a group of divers this summer (since their last visit 15 years ago) is unlikely to be a true indication of the 'state of play' – he had not observed such an increase. He pointed out that he has catalogued the decline in marine life which has been apparent around the island since the 1980s in a recent paper published by the Lundy Field Society, and that we are still awaiting signs of an upturn. He thinks it would be useful to repeat a survey done in the late 1970s of the levels of contaminants in various marine organisms at Lundy to at least discover if Lundy had similar levels or lower levels of contaminants to the nearby mainland. Sadly, he said, there is no 'magic bullet' to remedy the decline (as has been the case with the eradication of the rats on top of the island). MWn felt there could be some signs of recovery: he pointed out that catches of squid had increased just in the last couple of years, yet there had been very few since 1996 when the *Sea Empress* grounded off Pembrokeshire, implying that the oil spilled from the wreck had had some negative effect on the squid population in the Bristol Channel. CM also mentioned that he had come across 6 ^{small} crawfish on a dive this summer off the west coast, with 3 together in one crack, indicating that crawfish numbers are on the increase around the island. The NTZ monitoring team had also encountered a small crawfish in one of their pots this summer within the NTZ. KH repeated his request that such sightings should be reported to his organisation's 'SeaLife Signpost' project (details enclosed with these notes).

6. **Sea fans study – re-survey by MCS divers:** RI informed the Group that a party of Marine Conservation Society volunteer divers had visited the island in July to re-survey sea fans at selected sites off the east and west coast. He read out a short report which summarised the results. Generally speaking, there were signs that the sea fans were in a better condition than they had been in 2001. In 2001 the average 'condition score' was 2.2 (out of a maximum score of 5, which would indicate pristine condition), whilst in 2005 the average condition score was 3.1. However, this figure is still lower than any of the other area scores in the MCS 2001-2 survey in south-west Britain. Copies of the report are

available from RI. KH added that the sea fans appeared to have been suffering from a disease which may now have worked its way through the population. He mentioned an old record he had come across describing a dredge off Plymouth in 1924 as having 'many dead fans' in it, yet there has been a healthy population there now for many years.

7. **English Nature reports:** [note numbering differs from that given in the Agenda]

7a SAC reef monitoring – initial results: LH informed the Group that English Nature were still awaiting the final report from the contractors ASM Consultants Ltd. covering the fieldwork they undertook in 2003 and 2004, so results from the initial monitoring programme are not yet available. She also added that when the draft report on the overall condition of the SAC's features (reefs, shallow sandbanks, grey seals and sea caves) has been prepared (due to be by Christmas), she would welcome comments on it from members of the Advisory Group.

Kelp forest communities, subtidal bedrock and stable boulder communities and *Eunicella* (pink sea fan) characterised reef were surveyed in 2003 and 2004. The key aims of the condition assessment monitoring were to look at the extent and range of biotopes and species composition of those biotopes and carry out health check studies on the sea fans. This will produce a baseline for which repeat surveys can be carried out in order to report under the Habitats Directive. Drop down video and diving were used, located within 6 broad transects around the island.

Key findings:

Condition of Sea fans - Data collated by ASM in 2003 on the condition of sea fans at several sites north of Quarry Bay gave a comparable scoring to that collected by MCS dives between 1997 and 2001 (refer to Irving & Northen 2004).

7b Marine Monitoring Plan: LH informed the Group that work was in progress on this. The Plan will be incorporated into the new Management Plan. A draft should be complete by the end of November with a consultation period in December/January. It will include a rationale, and when, where, how and what monitoring will take place, whether for Condition Assessment, NTZ or MNR purposes.

7c Update of NTZ monitoring:

LH reminded the Group that the monitoring study is looking at three aspects of marine biodiversity: lobsters and crabs, scallops and long-lived epifauna on subtidal rocky habitats. Monitoring began in 2004 and data is being worked up to produce a report on initial results. A short hand-out was distributed to those present – this has the text and figures from a conference poster but the author stressed that it is not a scientific report.

Key results:

- 1) The abundances of lobster were significantly greater inside the NTZ compared to the control sites near and far. They were also slightly bigger but not significantly so.
- 2) The abundances of scallops were greater within NTZ compared to adjacent sites but not (statistically) significantly so. Scallops within NTZ were significantly larger than at adjacent sites.
- 3) There is only 1 year's data for epifauna so it is difficult to interpret the results. The large differences in mean abundance between the NTZ (Lundy's east coast) and the control locations (Lundy's west coast) were overwhelmed by large amounts of variation at smaller spatial scales. Also, interpretation is complicated by the fact that the west coast habitat (a control site) is quite different from the east coast.

Subject to further funding, monitoring should continue for a further 3 years and EN have been told that DEFRA are keen to continue funding.

MWI commented on the presumption that all was going extremely well with the NTZ monitoring results, whereas in fact it wasn't quite as good as we had been led to believe. Responding, BS pointed out that these were still early days and that a larger dataset over a longer period of time was necessary before firm conclusions about the effectiveness of the NTZ could be made. CE questioned the number of pots which were being used to sample lobster and crab numbers within the NTZ (4 strings of 20 pots per string are being used). He also took issue with the misleading way the project was being reported in the press – no comparisons were being given with the numbers of lobsters caught within the NTZ and those caught outside it; and the number caught in each pot, or per string of pots, was never mentioned. The short summary report handed out by LH provided some answers, but CE felt these facts should be made available to the public too.

KH indicated that it was unsatisfactory that results from 2003 and 2004 SAC reef monitoring studies were not yet available.

KH, as a member of the NTZ monitoring team in 2004, pointed out that he thought the monitoring techniques for assessing the numbers of lobsters and scallops were working well, but that the methodology for monitoring sessile species (which involved acquiring counts of certain species from a sufficient number of randomly placed quadrats on broken rock surfaces within a narrow band) needed to be reviewed. He felt it would be better to take viewpoint photos of sessile species in order to record their numbers, though this would not be 'stratified random sampling' as used for the other monitoring techniques as a statistically robust methodology.

7d Lundy seabed mapping study:

LH informed the Group that the swath bathymetry survey covering the MNR/SAC had now been completed. This was purely a bathymetric survey and it hasn't been ground-truthed or interpreted using existing data on biotopes or habitats. A couple of interesting features showed up including a more extensive reef than previously known on the south west coast and interesting sandbank features on the east coast. A full output should be completed by the end of October.

KH was very impressed by the topographical maps and pointed out that with a little manipulation of the raw data, a 3-D computer 'fly-through' could be created which would have wonderful possibilities for interpretative use, as part of the web site or as part of the display in the Beach Hut.

7e Pot buoy marking:

BS pointed out that pots being set around the island were still not being marked, which made identifying them (i.e. to which boat they belonged) nigh impossible. The DSFC ruling was that gear *should* be marked, but it is not compulsory. RI suggested that BS should approach the potting fishermen concerned and ask them to mark their pots voluntarily. It was pointed out that potting boats from Cornwall tended to use Dan buoys (flags) to mark their strings, whereas those from Devon tended to use simple buoys.

7f Interpretation Review:

BS informed the Group that the Interpretation Review undertaken by Tamara Rowson was going to be developed this winter by Charlie Kilgour into a Communications Strategy. A draft of this would go out to consultation (including to Advisory Group members) early next year. KH added that as technology was improving all the time, the business of 'planning ahead' was essential. ABe pointed out that he had written a new report on the interpretation of the coast and countryside of the whole of north Devon which includes Lundy. MD added that English Heritage would like to help with the interpretation of the two protected wreck sites, which were not being covered by the

Review. MWI emphasised the importance of ensuring the Review covered *all* aspects of the MNR/SAC interpretation and not just nature conservation interests. DG added that liaison was taking place with the National Trust for a review of interpretive materials on top of the island too.

7g Lundy 'Seaflex' mooring progress: BS informed the Group that the Seaflex mooring was now in place in Gannets' Bay, some 6 years after first being discussed by the Advisory Group. The mooring consists of four thick rubber cords rising from a 2 tonne sinker joining to a single polypropylene rope to which a buoy is attached. CP was able to give a first hand description of using the mooring. He said with wind against tide the buoy (part of which is made of metal) banged against his boat and he suggested a softer buoy was needed. CM added that the buoy was very difficult to pick up with a boat hook and that a 2 m 'tail' should be attached to it with a small 'pick-up' buoy. LH agreed to pass these comments back to the manufacturers of the Seaflex mooring.

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

- KH informed the Group that the Marine Bill was due to be published this time next year, and that if any individuals wished to see particular inclusions within the Bill, then now was the time to voice their opinions and to encourage the various NGOs attempting to influence its content. The 'Lundy experience' (i.e. the establishment of the NTZ and the difficulties associated with its protection) was being highlighted and used as an example of how inadequate the existing protective measures were at the moment, covering both the MNR and the NTZ.
- CE drew the Group's attention to a project he had been running this summer with divers who had been diving off his charter vessel *Lundy Murrelet*. The divers had been encouraged to count all the lobsters they saw during their dives. CE had summarised the findings of this study and handed out a summary sheet. He thinks that there may be considerable movement of individual lobsters from site to site, which may be affecting the numbers being caught by the NTZ monitoring team in their pots, thereby possibly skewing their figures. For instance, on the 6th Sept. no lobsters were observed on the wreck of the *Robert*, yet two days later 8 were seen. In addition, CE reported that all single clawed lobsters had disappeared this year after June, yet last year they were present throughout the season.
It was felt this study could be built on, especially if it could be done a little more scientifically. For instance, it would be interesting if 'tagged' lobsters (i.e. those caught and released within the NTZ) were seen by divers outside the NTZ boundary.
- BS asked all present to write down any particular aspect or issue they would like to see included, or improved upon, within the MNR Management Plan, which he is in the process of updating.

9. Presentation by Mark Dunkley (English Heritage) on Lundy's two protected wreck sites.

Mark Dunkley explained what responsibilities his department had (six staff work within Maritime Archaeology) and the dilemma they were faced with in protecting historically important wrecks whilst at the same time providing appropriate interpretation of them for the public. He then proceeded to elaborate on what was known about Lundy's two protected wrecks – the 'Gull Rock site' and the *Iona II*.

The interest features of the Gull Rock site are found at about 25 m depth on a silty rocky seabed. They were originally discovered in 1968, but then not re-located until 1983. The objects, which are thought to date from the 15th or 16th century, consist of two wrought iron breech blocks, a wrought iron gun and a quantity of stone shot. Wessex Archaeology, a company contracted by English Heritage to survey all protected wreck sites, reported in 2004 that their seemed to be evidence of damage to the site by illegal diving [this had been

reported to the Advisory Group at the time by John Heath]. Apparently, the site has a long history of damage to items and probably the illegal removal of items too. It is not certain whether this is actually a wreck site (no ship's timbers have been found), or whether these items had been thrown over the cliff. If they originate from a wreck, then the presence of stone shot implies it is likely to have been a man o' war and not simply an armed merchantman.

The *Iona II* was a Confederate gun runner which was built on the Clyde in 1863 but sank within a year. The wreck was discovered by Don Shiers in 1976. It has recently been confirmed that the centre of the wreck site lies close to the northern side of the designated 50 m radius exclusion circle around it, instead of at its centre. This needs to be corrected. There are many incidents of illegal diving on the *Iona II*, due to its close proximity (30-50 m) to the wreck of the *Robert*.

For both wrecks, the following programme of work is being proposed:

- A programme of Environmental Assessment
- A programme of Archive Assessment
- Targeted Archaeological Monitoring
- An Interpretation Board

In addition, it is proposed to place a formal mooring buoy on the *Robert* next year at an estimated cost of £5k.

Following Mark's presentation, a discussion ensued covering various points he had raised. The main interest was whether the *Iona II* site in particular could be opened to allow sports divers to dive on her legally. MD thought this could be possible with the provision of visitor licences. It was suggested that the local charter skippers could be granted these on an annual basis, together with members of the two local dive clubs, Ilfracombe and Appledore. If this were to happen, it would be a 'first'. MD welcomed this possibility and suggested taking the idea forward through liaison with the Advisory Group's Hon. Secretary.

10. Date of next meeting: Thursday, 20th April 2006 to be held at 7.00 pm in Torridge District Council's Committee Room, Riverbank House, Chanters Lane, Bideford.


20 April 2006