

## LUNDY MARINE PROTECTED AREA 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 Forum for the island.

Established: 1985



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## Minutes of the 12th meeting of the Lundy Marine Protected Area Advisory Group

(formerly known as the Lundy Marine Conservation Zone Advisory Group, the Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group, and originally the Lundy Marine Consultation Group, of which this was the 69<sup>th</sup> meeting)

held on **Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020** at 7.00 pm.

**NOTE: THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY USING ZOOM SHARING**

*Present:*

Keith Hiscock	(KH)	Marine Biological Association – Chair
Robert Irving	(RI)	Lundy Field Society – Hon. Sec.
Dean Jones	(DJ)	Lundy Warden
Rosie Ellis	(RE)	Lundy Assistant Warden & Education Officer
Maggs Ashton	(MA)	Ilfracombe BSAC
Mike Deaton	(MD)	Appledore SAC
Lauren Parkhouse	(LP)	Devon & Severn IFCA
Keith Denby	(KD)	Ilfracombe BSAC
Sarah Young	(SY)	WWF-UK
Jen Ashworth	(JA)	Head of Team, Highly Protected MPAs, Defra

### 1. **Welcome**

The Chairman (KH) welcomed all to the meeting. The whole meeting was to be recorded and participants had been asked to give their consent to allow this to happen.

KH explained that, as always, the purpose of the meeting is to allow users of the MPA to have their say, but also to find out what's happening around the island regarding management activities and observations which have been made since the last meeting.

Special thanks to Sarah Young of WWF-UK for hosting this Zoom meeting.

### 2. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from: Mel Parker (Natural England); Hefin Meara (Historic England); Leigh Hanks (charter skipper & Ilfracombe RNLI); and Derek Green (Lundy General Manager).

### 3. **Outstanding matters from the last meeting of the MPA Advisory Group, held on**

**22<sup>nd</sup> October 2019** (at the Ilfracombe & N Devon SAC Clubhouse, Ropery Road, Ilfracombe)

- 3.1 No amendments to these minutes were raised by those present, so they were agreed by all present as being an accurate record of the meeting.
- 3.2 As a matter arising, KH wanted to point out that the book chapter he had written for a volume on Marine Protected Areas and their management, entitled "*Using science effectively: selection, design and management of Marine Protected Areas*", had now been published. He would be happy to forward a pdf of the chapter to anyone interested.
- 3.3 KH wanted to draw members' attention to the South-West Partnership of Economic and Environmental Prosperity (SWEEP) series of webinars on Natural Capital in the South-West which were now available on-line at <https://sweep.ac.uk/natcapexpo>.

#### **4. Island happenings during the past 12 months      Derek Green**

Derek Green had sent his apologies earlier in the day, so this item did not happen.

#### **5. Report from the Island      Dean Jones, Warden**

- 5.1 Dean gave a Powerpoint presentation of notable events and wildlife sightings which he and Rosie Ellis (Assistant Warden) had made since March and the imposition of 'lockdown'. The following is a verbatim account of Dean's presentation:
- 5.2 Three staff had been furloughed by the Lundy Company, so their normal tasks were not able to be carried out. However, they were able to accomplish some tasks in a voluntary capacity.
- 5.3 DJ explained it had been a very weird year on the island, with the island being closed from 23<sup>rd</sup> March to 4<sup>th</sup> July because of the coronavirus. There are currently about 90 passengers coming over on the *Oldenburg*. The various restrictions have meant that normal wardening events have not happened this year and furlough has meant we have not been able to work in our usual way. In addition, the Beach Building has been closed all year, so no opportunity for visitors to view the interpretation panels in there.
- 5.4 New additions to the Conservation Team include new Ranger Matt Stritch (who is also a keen diver and wants to become involved with any research work happening within the MPA); and several volunteers who had helped out during the summer: Ben Hanson & Sophia Upton (Volunteer Assistant Wardens), Peter Hayes (Volunteer Assistant Ranger) and Alice Waterfield (General Assistant).
- 5.5 DJ & RE managed to carry out the long-term monitoring of the cup corals at three sites in Devil's Kitchen on 8<sup>th</sup> April in a voluntary capacity. This monitoring has been done annually since 1984. From all three sites they discovered 199 individual **scarlet-and-gold-star cup corals** (an increase of 11% on last year's numbers); and 9 Devonshire cup corals (also an increase of 11%). RE managed to discover a new site of 22 scarlet-and gold-star cup corals, bringing the total for the Devil's Kitchen up to 220 individuals.
- 5.6 DJ, RE and a couple of other islanders continued the seabird productivity monitoring during the spring/early summer. **Puffins** have continued to do well with about half of burrows producing a chick. The highest count of adult birds was of 405 on 1<sup>st</sup> July. **Guillemots** also had a very productive year (165 chicks from 217 attempts - the highest number of fledglings ever from the St Mark's site). DJ thinks this might be down to low gull numbers and low predation rates. Numbers of **herring gulls** and **lesser black-backs** have dropped by almost 70% since 2000. **Kittiwakes** seem to have done fairly well this year (101 chicks from 152 attempts)

in comparison with previous years, although their success rate is still poor. **Fulmars** had an average year, with 17 chicks from 36 attempts. **Manx shearwaters** have done pretty well, with at least 8 pairs now using the nest boxes installed by the Lundy Field Society in 2016. The intention is to replace these boxes with new ones this winter. DJ had also been helping net and ring storm petrels at the North End and it appears the colony there is gradually increasing in number.

- 5.7 Some bird rarities have included a **bridled tern** on 26<sup>th</sup> August (normally found in the sub-tropics of the southern hemisphere); a **Sabine's gull** on 26<sup>th</sup> August; and a **white-tailed sea eagle** on 26<sup>th</sup> October, the first seen from the island in 140 years!
- 5.8 **Grey seals**: the maximum number counted at the end of August was 213 individuals (the third highest count Lundy has ever had). So far this season, 49 white-coat pups have been counted, mostly off the east coast but also in some of the caves - the highest number ever to have been recorded at Lundy. Counts were made from cliff-tops and from the sea using the RHIB. A total of nine adult seals have been found to have become entangled in discarded fishing gear. The photo ID project has been continuing (with several re-sightings noted), our records being passed on to the Cornwall Seal Research Group. Some beaches have had to be closed to the public when pups have been seen on them, as well as snorkeling being suspended in the Devil's Kitchen on occasion.
- 5.9 There have been two records of **blue fin tuna** breaching off Lundy - the first seen on 28<sup>th</sup> September off Rat Island and the second on 11<sup>th</sup> October off the Quarries. A **thresher shark** was also seen breaching off Jenny's Cove on 21<sup>st</sup> July, much to DJ's delight. It's also been a good year for **harbour porpoise** and **common dolphin** too, with numerous sightings. For two consecutive days during the spring a pod of about 100 common dolphins was recorded. There's been one record of **bottlenose dolphin** off the east coast about two weeks ago. And there have also been four sightings of **minke whale** during the summer (three of which were seen during crossings from Bideford and Ilfracombe).
- 5.10 In the Landing Bay there has been evidence of **spider crab** *Maja brachydactyla* moults taking place, with huge numbers of cast exoskeletons being washed up on the foreshore. [KH showed some more photos of these a little later on]. RE managed to find a number of very small black **Celtic sea slugs** *Onchidella celtica* clinging to rocks in the Devil's Kitchen, the first time this very small species (only a few millimeters long) has been recorded from Lundy. There have been a few **by-the-wind-sailors** washed up over the past few weeks, and a **Portuguese man-o-war** was also seen earlier in the summer. We've also had a number of **goose barnacles** and **buoy barnacles** washed up over the past few weeks attached to floating objects.
- 5.11 Questions following DJ's talk.

LP asked if the gear that had entangled the seals was ghost fishing gear or live fishing gear. DJ: It was mostly thin monofilament lines from recreational anglers, though one or two also had bits of fishing net caught around their necks. LP agreed this sounded like ghost gear.

KH asked about the Lundy Facebook Page for marine sightings - is it being used? DJ agreed there appeared to have been few new sightings added (RE confirmed there had been none this year) and he was guilty of not uploading his own sightings. KH also asked if people were filling in the logsheets in the Tavern. DJ said they had been; Covid restrictions meant that the log books had been removed and replaced with single log sheets for sightings.

## 6. **Observations of marine life and activities during 2020**

- 6.1 KH mentioned that a pod of dolphins seen off the east coast in May was thought to number about 300. He asked DJ or RE if this was indeed the case? DJ said he wasn't sure but thought it maybe wasn't quite so many.
- 6.2 KH also showed some photos of the Celtic sea slug found by RE on 21<sup>st</sup> August. KH explained it is a south-western species which has been spreading along the north coast of Cornwall. KH associates it with 'surf beaches' so was surprised to find it had taken up residence at Lundy. He thanked RE for managing to spot it.
- 6.3 KH was keen to find out more information about the aggregations of spider crabs, as reported by DJ on and around August 18<sup>th</sup>. He showed a photo taken by Maggs Ashton (MA) in 2015 of a cluster of live spider crabs off the south-west of Lundy. He wondered if the crabs meet up in deeper water before heading in to some sheltered bay to moult. Fortunately, KH arrived on Lundy for a four-day break on 18th August so was able to investigate the washed-up remains of the spider crabs himself. Whilst a commonly reported phenomenon from the Welsh coast and the south coast of Devon, he believes this is the first time such an aggregation has been recorded from Lundy. He wondered if LP got to hear of such aggregations from the fishermen she came across. LP replied that she was aware of them happening from time to time off the south coast, but had not off the north coast.

MA confirmed that in 2015 a large number of spider crabs had been present between the wrecks of the *Robert* and the *Iona* off the east coast. They appeared to be all marching in one direction. MA added that her Ilfracombe dive club were delighted to have managed to get out to Lundy this summer (considering all of the lockdown restrictions), but had no marine life sightings of any significance to report.

- 6.4 KH added that while he was on the island in August, a camera crew had been there filming some sequences for BBC1's *The One Show*, with DJ leading a snorkeling session, with the broadcast footage mentioning the spider crab aggregation.

## **7. Natural England update**

- 7.1 Mel Parker was not present at the meeting but had sent RI some comments.
- 7.2 "In terms of a NE update, there isn't much to report this year. We were very disappointed that the Marine Festival, and associated marine surveys, have been postponed. However, we were pleased with the preparatory work that had gone in, and the funding we were offering has been ring-fenced to support the marine surveys so we are confident that the team will be able to hit the ground running when the festival is able to be run in a couple of years' time. We found some extra funding to support management of the MPA this year and it will be used to pay for the Wardens' time to complete some of the intertidal surveys that will keep the long-term data sets on Lundy up to date. NE is very interested in the compass card approach to MPA management and will work with others to see how this can be applied to Lundy so that the site and its users can benefit."

## **8. D&SIFCA update**

- 8.1 LP pointed out she didn't have much to say. As with everyone else, it's been a strange year. She and her colleagues have been working from home since March. Enforcement patrols started up again at the end of May/beginning of June; and our survey work began again at the start of July, but it's been very limited with what we've been able to do.
- 8.2 Sarah Clark has been in email correspondence this week with Shaun Galliver (Ilfracombe SAC) regarding crawfish sightings. LP and SC are due to hold a meeting soon to discuss the various sightings data of crawfish they have.

Hopefully by the next meeting, LP will be able to update the Group on those data.

- 8.3 KH asked if there had been any data back on crawfish that have been tagged. LP explained that 100 crawfish caught off S. Devon have been tagged from boats operating out of Dartmouth and Salcombe. Just one tagged individual has been re-caught so far. The Cornwall IFCA and the Isles of Scilly IFCA have also been tagging crawfish this year.

KH asked if any were tagged at Lundy and LP said no. The IFCA have yet to appoint a fisher who would be able to do the tagging, after Geoff Huelin had stopped fishing.

KH asked if dive club members had any reports of crawfish sightings. MD said one of the Appledore Club, Mark Lavington, had come across 6 or 7 during one dive at the South End, which were noticeably larger than the ones seen last year. LP asked to be put in touch with Mark so she could record these sightings more formally. KH suggested that divers be asked to collect any cast carapaces they came across on the seabed, as these will provide an indication of size. LP agreed this would be useful. MA added that Ilfracombe divers had seen quite a number of small crawfish at Gannets' Rock and also on the reef just south of the Knoll Pins.

KH admitted to being fascinated by crawfish and drew attention to an article of his about crawfish/spiny lobsters being published in the December 2019 edition of *British Wildlife* magazine.

## 9. **Historic England (marine archaeological) update**

- 9.1 Hefin Meara was unable to attend the meeting but had sent RI an update on the designation of the *South Australian* wreck in November 2019 as a Scheduled Monument.

"The *South Australian* was a composite-hull clipper ship that voyaged annually between London and South Australia for about 20 years, carrying passengers and goods. She was built at North Sands, Sunderland in 1868. She sank on 14th February 1889 while on a new passage from Cardiff to Rosario, Argentina, loaded with railway track and rail fishplates. She lies approximately 3 miles off Lundy's NE point on the edge of the Stanley Bank, in about 43 m depth (BCD), though outside the boundary of the MPA.

The wreck is scheduled for the following principal reasons:

- \* *Period*: The *South Australian* is highly representative of the short period of composite clipper ship building between 1860 to 1880; before competition from steam ships became too intense;
- \* *Historic interest*: Of interest for its composite construction with timber planking on a wrought-iron frame. This innovative method of construction gave the *South Australian* the structural strength of an iron ship but with good insulation and allowed it to successfully deliver very significant cargos to Australia, such as the Victoria Bridge;
- \* *Rarity*: The *South Australian* is the only clipper ship wrecked in English waters that was built during the first decade of clipper ship construction. The *South Australian* is a year older than the *Cutty Sark*;
- \* *Potential*: As much as 1.9m of hull remains buried offering the potential for preserved cargo (comprising British-manufactured munitions), machinery and structure, and;
- \* *Group value*: The *South Australian* has group value with other protected wrecks on the eastward side of Lundy and within the Lundy Special Area of Conservation (SAC); including Gull Rock (NHLE 1000053) and *Iona II* (NHLE 1000051).

An area of 75m centered on 51.21343, -4.60267 forms the protected area."

There's more information available on the National Heritage List for England - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1465225>"

- 9.2 In HM's absence, Keith Denby kindly explained how he and his diving colleagues at the Ilfracombe & N Devon Sub-Aqua Club had managed to find the name of the ship.

The wreck was discovered in the mid to late 1980s and was known initially by club members as 'the railway wreck'. Her sister ship, *City of Adelaide* was shipped from Scotland to Adelaide in 2014 where she now resides in the Maritime Museum. Historic England contracted Wessex Archaeology to carry out a ROV study of the wreck.

The wreck is a difficult site to dive as it's nearly 50 m deep (once tidal height is taken into consideration), it is affected by strong currents and it's typically very dark. Diving the site on air has its limitations - one's bottom time is very limited and there's a high risk of getting narked. These days it's mostly dived using mixed gases (typically 'tri-mix'). There are now some good images of the wreck (which KD showed). These show clearly that the cargo was indeed of railway lines.

KD gave a presentation on the wreck to the International Shipwreck Conference in Plymouth in February this year, and would like to see the wreck more widely known. As a means of doing this, he thought the island might be interested in hosting a display about the wreck in the St Helen's Centre. In addition to photographs, he has a lot of background information about the wreck which he'd be happy to share.

## **10. The Lundy Marine Festival 2020 - what now?**

- 10.1 RI explained what had become of the Marine Festival which was due to have taken place over three months this past summer.
- 10.2 Just as things were developing swimmingly... Covid19 threw a spanner in the works! With the outbreak of the pandemic, the consequent lockdown of the island (and elsewhere) meant the whole Festival had to be suspended. The website, which had only just been launched, had to be mothballed. Likewise, all of the projects, the activities, the displays - all put on hold. A poster advertising the Festival had just been produced [shown on screen] and was to be displayed all over North Devon - so maybe the fact it didn't get distributed was a blessing in disguise!
- 10.3 The provisional plan now is to hold the Festival during the summer of 2022. This will only be confirmed towards the end of next year, once we can all see a little further into the future than we can at present. RI has received many emails of support indicating that would-be participants for this year would still like to be involved when it is eventually put on again.
- 10.4 When that does happen... RI stated he wanted it to be even bigger and better than what was being planned for 2020. He's looking for more ideas for what can be included, more volunteers, more sponsors, etc. etc., so please let him know if you have any thoughts about this.

[Note: JA joined the meeting at this point]

## **11 The new MPA Zoning Scheme**

- 11.1 RI explained that, after three years of trying to get a new update to the Zoning Scheme sorted out, this had now been achieved. Back in December of last year, a new map was agreed by the partner organizations involved with the MPA's management (Lundy Company, Devon & Severn IFCA, Natural England and

Historic England). An accompanying Key provides details of the various zones and symbols, together with the species and habitats whose presence has led to the various protections. The map was published in the Lundy Field Society's Annual Report for 2019, which came out in July.

- 11.2 One question which KH had for the divers was whether they felt the site of the Gull Rock wreck had been plotted in the correct position, as he didn't think it had been. He believes it has been deliberately offset. RI agreed: the location on the map indicates the 'official' position of the wreck, but the actual wreck on the seabed lies more to the west. RI believes this has been done on purpose - soon after the wreck was first designated, several of the site's primary artefacts went missing and the present marked position (on the map) is a means of trying to stop this happening again. The diver exclusion area around this point extends up to a 100 m radius. KH disagreed with this opinion and believes the location of the site should be given as true and accurate.

## **12 Looking ahead: making the most of WWF's Compass Tool**

- 12.1 A few weeks after the start of lockdown, RI had approached Sarah Young at WWF-UK about the possibility of undertaking a study into how the management of the Lundy MPA might benefit from a closer look at the results of the Compass Tool. This Tool was used (via an on-line survey during the summer of 2018) by the WWF UK SEAS team to assess the development of MPAs in the north Devon area. See <https://ukseasproject.org.uk/cms-data/reports/Compass%20Report.pdf> for a report download.
- 12.2 Resulting from this, RI had produced a draft discussion document which concentrated on the results for the Lundy MPA which Sarah shared with the Advisory Group at our autumn meeting in 2018. The draft document has so far only been commented on by a small number of key people involved in the management of the MPA. The report's summary is reproduced below:
- 12.3 Report Title: "How can the results of the WWF's Compass Tool MPA management assessment scheme be used to enhance the management of the Lundy MPA?"

### Summary

During the summer of 2018, an assessment was made of the current management of the Lundy Marine Protected Area (MPA) using a 'Compass Tool', as adopted by the WWF UK SEAS project. The Lundy MPA was one of five MPAs in the north Devon region that was assessed using this tool. The Lundy MPA is the oldest MPA of the five and, unsurprisingly, the assessment, which can be divided into 'Creation', 'Pioneer' and 'Self-Sufficiency' phases, showed the highest overall score of 70%.

The assessment was based on the anonymous on-line responses of 18 people all of whom had some knowledge of the MPA, either by representing statutory agencies involved with its management, or as stakeholders who actively use the MPA. Whilst most of the 38 criteria on which the assessment was undertaken were considered by respondents to have been or were being addressed in a positive, proactive light, there were four criteria which did not score well, indicating areas for potential improvement of management in these areas.

This discussion document looks at these four low scoring criteria in some detail in an attempt to suggest how they might be addressed in order to improve their status.

It is meant as a starting point on which a possible way forward on the future management of the Lundy MPA might be based.

Your thoughts on the questions raised in this document would be much appreciated. The Lundy MPA has long been regarded as a 'leading light' within the UK marine conservation movement for its pioneering endeavour and its management structure in particular. Whilst being proud of this recognition, reflecting

the hard work of many individuals and organisations involved with the MPA's management and day-to-day running, we should not rest on these laurels. If we wish to see the MPA remaining as the 'go to' example of how a UK MPA should be managed and operated successfully, then we should address any apparent areas for improvement and seek to remedy these.

12.4 There were 4 (out of the 38) posed questions whose responses had scored poorly. These were:

- [38. Resources] **Is there long-term funding for the full cost of the MPA and its management/ operating costs?** Mean score: 0.3 (0 = No; 3 = Yes; though >50% of respondents 'unsure')
- [15. Plans & Management] **Have alternative income generating activities been considered to compensate for displacement of damaging activities in the MPA (e.g. helping fishers change gear or location)?** Mean score: 0.3 (0 = No; 3 = Yes; though >50% of respondents 'unsure')
- [24. Plans & Management] **Does the MPA have a business plan describing how income can be generated to deliver the MPA objectives in the long term?** Mean score: 1.0 (0 = No; 3 = Yes; though >50% of respondents 'unsure')
- [22. Resources] **Is the infrastructure and equipment needed to manage the site available?** Mean score: 1.1 (0 = No; 3 = Yes; about 35% of respondents 'unsure')

12.5 RI recognised that, at this current time of uncertainty and insecurity affecting all of our lives, there are far more pressing matters to worry about than the future management of the Lundy MPA. However, this draft discussion document has now been produced, and when the time is right, it can be dusted off and discussed in earnest.

12.6 KH asked the meeting's next contributor, Dr Jen Ashworth, if she knew if Defra had made any use of the Compass Tool for MPA management. JA said she didn't know. If it had been, it would have been through their Evidence Team or their Protected Areas Team. She suggested Sarah Young at WWF-UK might know more.

12.7 SY explained that the Compass Tool had been tried out in other areas, including sites in Scotland and at Flamborough Head. It transpired that the Tool's questions had been adapted to suit different MPAs. It's also been used in Germany, Italy and Spain, and even Daniel Pauly has shown an interest in it [Prof. Daniel Pauly is a world-renown fisheries scientist and leads the *Sea Around Us Project* at the University of British Columbia, Canada]. Whilst SY thinks it's not really the right time to be pushing this agenda, she believes that the next year or two may provide opportunities of utilising the Tool to a greater extent for marine management purposes. She felt RI's study was useful, particularly with regard to exploring future funding of MPAs, and she expected this to become a more prominent issue in the coming months and years.

12.8 KH mentioned that he was aware of the figure of about £150k/year being required to manage an MPA effectively. He asked if that figure had come from the WWF UK SEAS project. SY confirmed that it had. The figure had been used as part of the submission by NGOs to Defra with regard to the projected costs for managing all MPAs in the UK.

### **13. Highly Protected MPAs - an update from Defra**

13.1 KH welcomed Dr Jen Ashworth [JA] along to the meeting. Jen worked with Natural England for a number of years before being seconded to Defra to head up their High Protected Marine Areas team. [RI has since heard that since this meeting, Jen has moved on to head up a team at Defra looking at practical fitness testing in fish].

She kindly agreed to let us know the outcomes of Defra's report on Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs), which was published in the summer.

- 13.2 The study of HPMAs was commissioned by former Secretary of State Michael Gove in June 2019 and was led by former environment minister Richard Benyon. The main recommendation of the study, released exactly 12 months later, was that "HPMAs are an essential component of the MPA network and that the Government should introduce them as soon as possible within Secretary of State waters" (that is, English inshore and offshore waters and Northern Irish offshore waters).
- 13.3 There were 25 recommendations in total. No pilot sites were identified, due to a curtailment of the whole process due to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. The official response from Government to the report will be 'across government', meaning that all departments will be expected to have some input to the response. If the Government decides to go ahead and implement HPMAs, a period of six months will be required for a stakeholder consultation and an implementation plan to be drawn up prior to the actual identification of pilot sites.

The full report can be downloaded from:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/890484/hpma-review-final-report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/890484/hpma-review-final-report.pdf)

- 13.4 RI asked how the proposed implementation process would deal with the apparent opposition to HPMAs from commercial fishers. JA explained that if the Government wanted HPMAs to be set up, then they would be. It was a matter of trying to minimize their impact on fisheries. The fisheries sector is having to cope with a number of unknowns at the moment. Things like 'spill-over' from HPMAs may provide some benefits, but their impact remained uncertain at the moment. JA stressed that the main purpose of HPMAs would be to protect the marine environment, so any 'win-win' scenarios would be in addition to that main purpose.
- 13.5 KH requested that JA say something about the status of SACs post-Brexit. Although this remit doesn't strictly lie within Jen's team at Defra, her understanding was that, come the 1st January 2021, there would be no change in the status of SACs or indeed any other site currently protected by EU legislation. The policy at Defra was to refer to all areas, no matter how they were established, as being Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).
- 13.6 JA mentioned that earlier today, the MMO has launched its call for evidence on offshore MPAs. This is the first time this will happen through measures in the Fisheries Bill (once it has become an Act), whereas in the past any fisheries measures for MPAs have had to have the approval of all EU Member States. The offshore MPAs in question include the Dogger Bank and there's one inshore MPA which is Studland Bay.
- 13.7 KH asked JA for a comment about the new Office for Environmental Protection, which will become the body responsible (among other matters) of levying fines in the marine sphere. JA explained she didn't know a lot more than anyone else. She said that the provisions to set up the agency were included in the Environment Bill which was currently going through parliament. She added that ministers were keen to assure everyone concerned that there would be no lowering of standards or weakening of protection to marine sites once the Bill becomes an Act.
- 13.8 Finally, JA added that although 2020 was to have been a marine 'super year' with various international conventions due to have taken place, there was now some momentum within Defra to move this to 2021. "Hopefully there'll be opportunities for 'best practice' scenarios in the world of marine protection to be highlighted, and we hope that Lundy will be up there being lauded for its good works."

#### **14. Any Other Business**

14.1 KH reported that the SW Marine Ecosystems Conference was unable to take place in April 2021, but that a report on 2019 had nevertheless been produced. There will be no face-to-face conference in 2021 but there will be a number of webinars (centered on 11 topics) which will take place in February and March.” [Following the LMPAAG meeting, details of the webinars in 2021 have started to be published: keep in touch via <http://swmecosystems.co.uk/>].

Finally, KH wanted to say a special thank-you to Sarah Young at WWF-UK for hosting this Zoom meeting, particularly as it is taking place while she is officially on leave; and to RI for his various secretarial duties.

No fixed date has yet been proposed for the next meeting of the Advisory Group. RI will let members know nearer the time, but hopefully it'll be some time in April 2021.