

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 13th 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 70th meeting)

held on **Tuesday 25th May 2021** 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.)
Derek Green	(DG)	Lundy General Manager
Dean Jones	(DJ)	Lundy Warden
Rosie Ellis	(RE)	Lundy Assistant Warden & Education Officer
Maggs Ashton	(MA)	Ilfracombe BSAC
Steve Ashton	(SA)	Ilfracombe BSAC
Lauren Parkhouse	(LP)	Devon & Severn IFCA
Mel Parker	(MP)	Natural England
Hefin Meara	(HM)	Historic England
Leigh Hanks	(LH)	Obsession Charters
Martin Batt	(MB)	Coastwise North Devon

1. **Welcome**

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

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

Special thanks to Derek Green, Lundy General Manager, for hosting this Zoom meeting.

2. **Apologies for absence**

No apologies had been received.

3. Agreement of the minutes from the last meeting of the MPA Advisory Group, held on 28th October 2020 (via Zoom) and matters arising

- 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 had been pleased to hear from Dr Jen Ashworth from Defra that the government intends to pursue their intention of establishing Highly Protected Marine Areas, though at the moment it would appear everything is on hold. Richard Benyon has now taken up a seat in the House of Lords, but is still overseeing the work of HPMA's at Defra.

4. Island happenings during the past 12 months Derek Green

- 4.1 DG explained things were slowly starting to return to some sort of normality. Lundy re-opened on 13th April (2021) and transport links are now running to schedule.
- 4.2 A brief overview: the island had been open over Christmas and New Year, but had closed on 2nd/3rd January for the normal three weeks of maintenance. The 3rd lockdown then started on 6th January. During the lockdown periods, most of the staff have been on furlough. Much of DG's job has been making sure there have been sufficient funds coming in to keep Lundy 'afloat'. A public appeal launched in 2020 had managed to raise £215k. In addition there have been a number of grants, particularly covering the heritage sector, allowing a number of maintenance and repair projects to be undertaken. The gradual easing of restrictions has meant that the island has yet to reach full capacity (the *Oldenburg* is only able to take a maximum of 140 people), and it's hoped a full lifting of restrictions will be announced on 21 June.
- 4.3 Those who had booked to stay on the island last year when the full lockdown happened, had their booking deferred to this year, which has meant the island is fully booked this summer and also next year too. The Vestry in the Church (which sleeps two) has now been added to the places one can stay on the island, following an agreement reached with the PCC (Parochial Church Council).
- 4.4 Whilst the *Oldenburg* has been alongside in Bideford, the lower deck staff quarters have been refurnished and at Hartland the helipad has been upgraded. Both Shore Offices have also had makeovers to smarten them up, and the vehicles have a new set of livery too.
- 4.5 Some major projects which were due to have taken place last year have been pushed into this year, including the replacement (and enlargement) of the water tanks on the top of the island, and the replacement of the island's generators. Both of these infrastructure projects have been helped with funds from the National Trust. The jetty is also being given an upgrade, as many of the fenders required replacing, and the fittings (including the access ladder) are due to be replaced this summer.
- 4.6 MP asked if there was likely to be any accommodation available for the planned bioblitz next year, especially with Natural England staff planning to visit. DG explained that with dates for the bioblitz now decided, availability of accommodation would be being assessed. He thought RI would be saying a bit more about this later on.
- 4.7 KH asked if the campsite on the island would be open after 21st June, and DG said it was open already, but the poor recent weather had meant it hadn't been very full.

5. Conservation Team Report Dean Jones (Warden) & Rosie Ellis (Assist. Warden)

- 5.1 Dean gave a Powerpoint presentation of notable events and wildlife sightings which he and Rosie had made since the last meeting in October 2020. The following is a verbatim account of Dean's presentation:
- 5.2 The Conservation Team was pleased to welcome Matthew Stritch last year as the island's new Ranger, and since early April we've now been joined by volunteers Ben Arkliss and Eleanor Grover. They are helping with various tasks but particularly the seabird monitoring.
- 5.3 The good spring tides at the end of March/start of April saw the repeat monitoring of intertidal sites, including the cup coral monitoring in the Devil's Kitchen. Whilst the number of Devonshire cup corals (*Caryophyllia smithii*) had remained stable, the number of scarlet-and-gold-star cup corals (*Balanophyllia regia*) showed a marked increase, from 191 in 2020 (which had been an 11% increase on the previous year) to (a record) 232 in 2021. What are thought to be two new sites for the *Balanophyllia* coral have also been found within the Kitchen, so the species seems to be doing particularly well at the moment. On behalf of Natural England, a series of five rockpools within the Kitchen were also re-assessed, the first time this has been done since 2015. The study of these pools was initiated by KH and RI in 1984.
- 5.4 DJ was delighted with his find of a Montagu's sea snail *Liparis montagui*, an unusual small fish which clings to rocks using its modified pelvic fins, though this species has been recorded from the island before. Small numbers of invasive seaweed species were also noted, such as wireweed *Sargassum muticum* and harpoon weed *Asparagopsis armata*.
- 5.5 Another unwanted find (of a non-native, invasive species) was the presence of a small number of Pacific oysters *Crassostrea gigas* attached to rocks in the vicinity of Rat Island and around the jetty, first found last summer. Although these oysters are known to multiply rapidly in sheltered waters of south Devon (KH has counted up to 70/m² in the Tamar!), KH doesn't think they'll take over at Lundy. To ensure this doesn't happen, it has been agreed with Natural England to kill any that are found by means of smashing their shells. DJ asked if anyone saw any individual oysters this summer to let him know.
- 5.6 Earlier in the year, a scallop-dredging vessel, *Emily-J* (E123), was seen very close to the NE border of the MPA with her gear down, though for some reason had her IVMS tracker turned off. Following advice from D&SIFCA, DJ radio-ed the vessel to find out what she was up to, pointing out he was watching her. D&SIFCA staff have subsequently seen the track of the vessel and believe that she was actually fishing within the MPA, so they are proceeding with an infringement investigation. DJ has sent John Newman at D&SIFCA a report of the incident, together with a number of photographs. The vessel ended up having engine trouble and coming into the Landing Bay.
- 5.7 We're now in the middle of the seabird breeding season, and numbers of most species seem to be fairly healthy. Puffins, razorbills and guillemots all seem to be doing pretty well and may well be heading for a bumper year. Kittiwakes are busy building nests. The RSPB are bringing over four volunteer experts for the first week of June to carry out a full island seabird census, the aim being to count every individual and every nest site.
- 5.8 Grey seals: numbers during 2020 appear to be good. The count on August 24th (just along the east coast) led to 218 individuals being counted, the third highest count on record. 50 white-coast pups were recorded in 2020, another record (the previous record being 43 in 2019). The high numbers could well be linked with the absence of human visitors. Over 110 individual adults were photographed, and these images were passed on to Sue Sayer and her colleagues at the Cornwall Seal Group and Research Trust. Ten known Lundy breeders were re-identified. Some individuals have been known from Lundy since 2011. DJ had photographed

one individual (which bears an orange tag no. 083) in the Devil's Kitchen last year, which had had an interesting history. It had been rescued in 2016 at Cap Ferret, Brittany and released in May 2016 at Plouarzel, Brittany, only to turn up some four years later at Lundy, some 212+ miles away! DJ believes this is the first record of a grey seal moving between Brittany and Lundy.

- 5.9 Other sightings of marine megafauna this spring have included a couple of minke whales - one off the Quarries and one in Jenny's Cove. DJ is expecting more sightings of other species in the weeks ahead. DJ regularly updates the Lundy Bird Blog with all sightings (not just of birds) if you want to keep up with the latest news (www.lundybirds.blogspot.co.uk).
- 5.10 DJ is working on updating the Lundy Marine Management Plan, which was last updated in 2017. Particular aspects which require attention are the inclusion of the new MPA Zoning Scheme; an update to the Code of Conduct; the inclusion of the HMS Montagu historic wreck site (designated a Scheduled Monument in 2019); and inclusion of the Pacific oyster as a new invasive species.
- 5.11 Media interests: a number of TV shoots have been undertaken including a show which Simon Reeve is presenting, and BBC's Springwatch (which is currently airing on BBC1/2), featuring a piece about the MPA [shown on 3rd June] and also a 'mindful moment', shot in the Devil's Kitchen, where there is no commentary to detract from the natural sounds.
- 5.12 DJ & RE have both been given some snorkel training from qualified instructors, ready for when restrictions are lifted and snorkel safaris can be run again. Guided walks have been happening, but not the talks in the Wheelhouse, as social distancing doesn't allow for those to happen.
- 5.13 KH wanted to thank DJ & RE for their sharp eyes in spotting the Pacific oysters. He was surprised that the larvae had managed to get over to Lundy as larval lifespan is believed to be about 14 days and they were thought to be entirely intertidal. However, he assumes the closest source of a parent oyster/s must be the north coast of Devon. KH also wanted to thank DJ & RE for their contributions from Lundy to the *SW Marine Ecosystems Report* (which he edits) and is produced on an annual basis. Since it started in 2012, this features year-by-year updates of marine observations and on-going projects, providing an overview of the state of SW seas. (www.swmecosystems.co.uk)

6. Observations of marine life and activities since October 2020

- 6.1 No one had anything to report on this. LH mentioned that his colleague Andrew Bengy had been out last weeked (22/23 May) with his charter boat, and that he is due to be out this coming weekend, so he's hoping the viz. will clear up a bit by then.
- 6.2 KH reminded one and all of the existence of the Lundy marine life sightings Facebook page, so if anyone does see anything of note, please post your observations onto the page! KH made the point that most divers are happier using social media than filling in forms, so he urged all charter skipper to encourage their divers to post photos on the site.
- 6.3 With regard to species which people should be looking out for, KH mentioned he expects the non-native brown alga wakame (*Undaria pinnatifida*) to make an appearance at Lundy soon. It is an edible seaweed which originates from the NW Pacific, and has spread along the south coast from the Solent, where it was first recorded in 1994. It has a distinct midrib running up through the blade (leaf) and a short, wavy, corrugated stipe (stem) close to the holdfast. It may be confused with dabberlocks (*Alaria esculenta*), which also occurs at Lundy, but *Alaria* lacks the corrugated stipe.

7. Natural England update

- 7.1 MP wanted to thank DJ, RE and the others in the Conservation Team for all their efforts during the lockdown periods. She explained it had been a difficult time for Natural England staff during this time, with people working from home and, for some (including her) in a part-time capacity.
- 7.2 In recent years, Natural England's funds to support the MPA had been cut back considerably, but MP was pleased to have secured some funding (for 2020) which had allowed for the intertidal monitoring (which DJ mentioned earlier) to take place this spring. She was also hopeful there'd be a small amount to support marine projects this coming financial year (2021/22).
- 7.3 Natural England has no immediate plans to undertake any subtidal monitoring of the SAC. This was last done in 2014/15. Their outlook was now to prioritise their resources on a risk basis (mostly from anthropogenic sources) and as Lundy was fortunate to escape from many of the pressures experienced by many mainland coastal sites, it was assessed as being a low priority. However, on a slightly different note, MP was pleased to confirm Natural England's support of the Marine Festival.
- 7.4 MP explained Natural England were looking for potential projects they could help fund which could be shown to benefit one or more of the following: nature recovery; connecting people with nature; and providing evidence to help with management decisions. MP would be keen to hear from anyone with ideas which may come under these categories.
- 7.5 RI asked MP if the monitoring of the SAC, which was required to be undertaken every six years (under European legislation), had now stopped entirely. MP explained that efforts had been made to do more efficient monitoring by grouping together sites with the same named features (which in Lundy's case are reefs, subtidal sandbanks, caves and grey seals). However, this had been tricky to do as they had 'fallen out of sync.'. Priority now is being given to sites/features on an 'exposure to risk' basis. MP added that the priority assessment of sites is now being done at a national level and not at a regional level, which is what had happened in the past. RI pointed out that long-term data sets were rare in the marine environment and he was disappointed to hear the Lundy sets were now ending. RI then queried whether the large number of recently-designated MCZs had a bearing on the reduction in available funds, but MP said she thought not as SACs were treated differently. KH added that he felt the monitoring of the population of the nationally rare sunset cup coral at the Knoll Pins needed to be continued, and that a full assessment of its decline over the years should be undertaken.

8. D&SIFCA update

- 8.1 LP confirmed what DJ had said about the potential infringement by the scallop-dredging vessel, and that the D&SIFCA are investigating this.
- 8.2 LP had been undertaking her regular check of all IVMS tracking data over the past year (2020), particularly looking at the NE corner of the Lundy MPA where boats with demersal mobile gear were permitted to enter. She had found that there was no activity at all in that area of the MPA during that time. By comparison, she thought that in 2019 there had only been 5 days of activity within the same area, involving just a single turn-around sweep of a vessel towing gear.
- 8.3 LP pointed out that she was still keen to hear of any crawfish sightings data from around the island. These will be added to other crawfish data coming from the Isles of Scilly, Cornwall and Devon, thus building a picture for the whole south-west. No tagging of crawfish has been done off the north coast (of Devon), but 210 tags have been applied off the south coast.

- 8.4 KH added that he encouraged divers, should they encounter a crawfish out and about on the seabed, to try to see if they could sex the individual - simply a matter of turning it over and inspecting its paddle-shaped paired swimmerets [in females these are relatively large - being used to contain a clutch of eggs - and opposite ones overlap; in males they are considerably smaller and do not overlap. Also, the female's hindmost pair of walking legs have small pincers at their ends, whereas those of males do not]. LP added that only one of the 210 tagged individuals off the south coast (with a carapace length of 145 mm, so quite large) had been 'in berry', and that was a couple of months ago. KH thought the historic data showed that females with carapaces larger than 80 mm were capable of bearing eggs.

9. Historic England (marine archaeological) update

- 9.1 Hefin Meara pointed out that he was now on secondment within Historic England so he was no longer going to be the main point of contact for the Advisory Group for marine archaeological issues. His duties were being taken over by Terry Newman (Terence.Newman@HistoricEngland.org.uk), who did some work with Lundy matters about 8 years ago when Alison James was representing English Heritage on the Group and took maternity leave.
- 9.2 As far as the licensing situation (with regard to the two protected wrecks) goes, for diving on the *Iona II* wreck, the current licencees are: the Lundy Company's overarching licence (which covers Clive Pearson, Andrew Benguey, Ben Benguey, Dean Jones, Leigh Hanks, Colin Eastman, Stuart Carpenter and Derek Green) and Fiona Hampton-Matthews; for the Gull Rock site, it's just the Lundy Company which has a current licence.
- 9.3 Towards the end of last year, there was a flurry of licence applications when lockdown restrictions were lifted. Licences were issued to David Salem, Margaret Ashton and Mike Peters. However, HM doesn't think anyone actually dived on the protected wrecks last year (2020).
- 9.4 HM informed the Group that RI had put a grant application to Historic England for projects associated with the original Marine Festival, which had been approved. HM confirmed he was happy to recommend this be carried forward to the Festival next year, though it would depend on next year's budgets.
- 9.5 MA asked about her licence application to dive on the *Iona II* site in September last year. HM pointed out that all annual licences end on 30th November, no matter when they began, so he recommended MA applies again for the remaining six months of this year. In answer to a question from DG, HM confirmed that the Lundy Co. licence had been renewed about December time (which DJ had sorted out).
- 9.6 HM picked up DJ's intention to produce an updated Marine Management Plan for the MPA, and asked if DJ was likely to require any further information on the wreck of HMS *Montagu*. DJ explained he had yet to reach that part of the Plan but that he'd be in touch with HM if he found information was lacking.
- 9.7 KH suggested that, as part of the Marine Festival next year, one project could be to retake the viewpoint photos on the *Iona II*. HM agreed this would certainly be useful. [RI had already got that listed as a participatory project from 2020!]. KH mentioned he had used a laminated leaflet to find the viewpoint positions and asked if the intention was to reproduce these for next year. HM explained that heavier dive slates, pre-printed with relevant information, might be a better option this time around.
- 9.8 KH asked if there were any more recent photographs of the *Montagu* than the ones he'd taken in about 1984. HM confirmed that Wessex Archaeology added quite a few more during their survey of the wreck in 2018. HM agreed to share these more recent photos with KH.

10. The Lundy Marine Festival - plans for 2022

- 10.1 RI explained that, following a meeting with Derek Green, Dean Jones and Rosie Ellis last week, it had been agreed that the Festival will now take place next year between Thursday, 14th July and Saturday, 10th September.
- 10.2 Within this window, there are four good-excellent spring tide periods (during the middle of the day), when tide heights will drop to 1 m or lower; and three good-excellent neap tide periods when currents will be at their weakest for diving projects. One or two weeks before the official start of the Festival may be included for specific projects too.
- 10.3 The Bioblitz on the shore will run between Thursday 14th - Sunday 17th July (that's the first few days of the Festival), when the press, radio & TV people will be invited over to the island as well. A three day period right at the end of the Festival, 10th - 13th September will be earmarked as 'fall back' dates for the Bioblitz.
- 10.4 Unfortunately, all of the accommodation on the island is already booked for next year, so those wishing to stay overnight on the island will need to camp. On the Saturday at the end of the Festival, 10th September, 'a bit of a knees-up' is proposed when the winners of the Splash In! competition (which will run for the whole Festival period) will be announced as well as, hopefully, some results from some of the citizen science projects which would have been undertaken.
- 10.5 All of the projects lined up for last year will be available for participating in again, such as the Nautical Archaeology Society's Wreck Days; the Marine Conservation Society's Seasearch dives; visits from members of the Porcupine Marine Natural History Society, Coastwise North Devon and the Lundy Field Society to help with the Bioblitz; and over 20 shore and diving tailored projects to participate in. Then there'll be illustrated talks and displays from time to time in the Church, and maybe a small aquarium in the Beach Hut.
- 10.6 A website was prepared for the previous iteration of the Festival last year, and that will be re-vamped for next year. Also being planned are a whole suite of social media promotions and news streams.
- 10.7 To assist with helping to run the show on the island, the Conservation Team will be expanded by one person, someone dedicated to help with filling diving cylinders, helping out with shore explores and dives, and being the main point of contact for those staying on the island for matters to do with the Festival. RI thanked Derek and Dean for agreeing to this.
- 10.8 And... RI mentioned if you've been keeping abreast of the life and times of the Marine Protected Area, you'll be aware that 2022 will mark its **50th birthday!** So that will be being celebrated too.

RI asked for all to make a note of the Festival dates (14th July - 10th September) and to make sure these are incorporated within your various organisations' own calendars. He emphasised that it would be great to have the support of all the organisations which are members of this Advisory Group.
- 10.9 Following RI's announcement, DG added that, for the initial few days of the Festival when the Bioblitz will be taking place, he has arranged for the Festival's exclusive use of the campsite, and also the use of the Barn (which can sleep 14 people). [Thank you, Derek!]. DG also mentioned that he had discussed use of the Church for research purposes with the PCC last week, and they seemed to agree this was a suitable use of the building.

11. Any Other Business

- 11.1 MB introduced himself as the new representative of North Devon Coastwise. The group's field studies begin tomorrow with a trip to Hele Bay (just east of Ilfracombe) with members of the Devon Wildlife Trust, in support of the Biosphere's Nature

Recovery Plan. MB has been editing this Plan over the past year or so, which included a contribution from KH covering the shore habitats of Lundy and the North Devon coastline. See <https://www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk/nature-recovery-plan.html>

- 11.2 MB also wanted to add that he works part-time for a company called Naturetrek and he's bringing over his first group to Lundy on 24th June, so he's been in touch with Dean to make arrangements. As this will be (hopefully) the first week after restrictions are lifted, he's hoping it all goes smoothly!
- 11.3 RI raised a matter which he and KH had been involved with over the past few weeks on behalf of the Advisory Group and that was to show the Group's support for Phil Newman, Marine Warden at the Skomer MCZ. Some of the Group may recall that Phil came to talk to us about the Skomer MCZ at our October 2019 meeting. He is due to retire in October of this year having acted as the Marine Warden there since its 1991 designation as a Marine Nature Reserve, and their Advisory Group is concerned that NRW may replace him with someone who is less of a marine biologist and more of a 'pen-pusher'. Following a request from Blaise Bullimore, another long-standing supporter of the Skomer MCZ, KH & RI composed a letter of support which was sent to the Chair of NRW, Claire Pillman. RI has since received a letter back, part of which states:

"...It is clear from your letter that the work of the MCZ team and the investment we have made in the site is very much appreciated and recognised at a national, if not international, level. We are delighted that the site and the team we have based there has such strong support. I can assure you that we will be recruiting behind Phil to ensure that we can still continue to manage and monitor the site but also to serve wider marine monitoring requirements, which the team has already been contributing to for a number of years."

- 11.4 KH wanted to add a bit about Highly Protected Marine Areas in that, following Brexit, the UK was having to modify a lot of the reporting systems which used to end up in Brussels. The Office for Environmental Protection was announced as being the overseeing authority for such reports in future. However, it has yet to be formally recognised, something that will happen after Royal Assent is given in the autumn, and we are told it will be "world class". We shall wait and see... This could well have a bearing for future reporting procedures for the SAC in particular.

Finally, KH wanted to say a special thank-you to Derek Green for hosting this Zoom meeting.

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 October 2021.