

REPORT OF THE LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP

By

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The Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group consists of representatives from a wide range of organisations, all of which have an interest in the waters around the island. Current 'membership' consists of representatives from the following groups (though interested parties other than those listed here are always welcome to attend meetings):

British Sub-Aqua Club; Devon Sea Fisheries Committee; Devon Wildlife Trust; English Nature; Hartland Heritage Coast Service; Landmark Trust; Local Sea Fishing Interests; The Lundy Company Ltd.; Lundy Field Society; Marine Archaeological Interests; Marine Conservation Society; Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food; National Rivers Authority; National Trust; Royal Yachting Association; South-West Federation of Sea Anglers; Torridge District Council; Worldwide Fund for Nature (UK).

Meetings of the Advisory Group take place twice a year. In 1995 the meetings were held on 20th April and 19th October in Bideford. The agenda for each meeting varies depending on what matters are of current interest, but it always includes a 6-month report from the Marine Nature Reserve (MNR) given by the warden (see Warden's Report in this volume). Meetings of the MNR Management Group are planned to take place soon after those of the Advisory Group, so that relevant matters which arise during Advisory Group meetings can be taken up and discussed at Management Group meetings. Meetings of the Management Group in 1995 took place on 14 June and 13 November.

The main points which have been discussed by the Advisory Group during the year are summarised below:-

Diving and visiting dive groups - Concern was expressed that whilst numerous dive boats were now visiting the island on a regular basis, few of their occupants were landing and thus may be unaware of the MNR's byelaws and code of conduct. The group was informed that there could be as many as eight dive boats present in the Landing Bay over a busy weekend during the summer. One suggestion was that visiting diving groups be required to register with the warden before diving within the MNR, though it was envisaged there could be difficulties enforcing this idea. It was also apparent that divers had been diving on the *Jona II* protected wreck off the east coast without permission (risking a possible fine of £5000). In order to avoid damage to the *Jona II* site from boats looking for the nearby wreck of the *Robert* (by dragging anchors), it was suggested that a permanent mooring block/buoy be fixed to the *Robert*. The (perennial?) problem of dive charter boats being accused by fishermen of taking large numbers of shellfish from within the reserve was also raised. Little could be done about this until the warden took possession of a new boat which would allow easier access to visiting boats. The code of conduct (a voluntary code) requests divers to take no more than one crab or lobster at any one time. A large tangled mass of monofilament netting had been found on 17 September at 25m depth off the south coast between the Rattles and Black Rock by Chris Mandry. At least twenty edible crabs had become entangled in it.

Protected wrecks within the MNR - John Heath of the Appledore Sub-Aqua Club had undertaken an archaeological survey of the protected wreck site at Gull Rock in 1993. The site was first located in 1968 and the wreckage (consisting of two cannon, one breech gun and eight stone cannonballs) is thought to date from the same period as the

Mary Rose, ie. mid-16th century. A full biological survey of both this site and the *Jona II* was completed by members of the Marine Conservation Society's Working Party during June (see separate report in this volume).

Seal survey - John Heath was in the course of producing a catalogue of portrait photographs of as many seals as possible from around the island. This would aid in the identification of individuals.

Potting activity within the MNR - the warden had started recording where pots were being set around the island. This is being done by marking on a map where pots are seen during periodic walks around the coast. This will provide a record of where the most heavily potted sites are and when they are fished. Laurie Winsborrow of the North Devon Fisherman's Association pointed out that local pot fishermen were seeking an agreement to use only 'inkwell' pots around Lundy and to ban the use of 'parlour' pots. The latter are designed with a non-return valve so that they could be left on the sea bed and continue fishing for several weeks at a time. Inkwell pots, on the other hand, allow prey to escape from the pot once the bait has been eaten, and therefore need to be lifted within 2-3 days of being set. It was hoped that strings of pots may be marked with flags in future, so that the boats that set them may be identified.

The Lundy proposed Special Area of Conservation (SAC) - Dr Paul Gilliland, Marine Designations Officer with English Nature, gave a short presentation during the April meeting about the new proposed SAC around the island. It was one of nineteen marine SACs being put forward to the European Community under the EC Habitats Directive. Lundy had been proposed on account of its internationally important rock reefs (both intertidal and subtidal). Designation would not take place until 1998, assuming the various acceptance criteria were met.

Marine aggregate extraction - Richard Leafe, English Nature's coastal geomorphologist, gave a short presentation to the group on the nature of sediment movement within the Bristol Channel, especially with regard to proposed aggregate extraction in Area 394, some 11 miles north of Ilfracombe. He kindly provided some figures which helped to put the whole matter in perspective. Within the Bristol Channel there are 17 m tonnes of material in motion during a spring tide. The suspended load can range from 100 mg/l to 10,000 mg/l. There appear to be two gradients: from inner to outer; and from north to south. At Lundy, concentrations of suspended silt loading are much lower, though 'natural' turbidity levels can vary dramatically. Studies have shown from the proposed extraction Area 394 that fine sediment can travel 21 km in a south-westerly direction and 22 km in a north-easterly direction, within the course of one tidal cycle. He concluded that he saw no threat to Lundy emanating from this site. Of more concern would be the proposals to extract material from the 'Baggy 2' site, which extends over much of outer Bideford Bay. The consultation procedure regarding this site was still at an early stage however. It later materialised that the Welsh Office were planning to commission a three-year research project into sediment movements within the Bristol Channel.

MCS Diving Working Party to the MNR, 3-10 June 1995 - this is reported on elsewhere within this volume.

If there are any points which members of the LFS would like to see raised at future meetings of the Advisory Group, they should contact the Group's Hon. Secretary, Robert Irving, at the address given above.