

REPORT OF THE LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP

By

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ABSTRACT

The topics discussed by the MNR Advisory Group during 1999 are summarised. These have included the construction of the new jetty in the Landing Bay; the revision of the MNR Management Plan and EN Regulation 33 Advice for the cSAC; fishing activities; buoying popular dive sites; and the first sighting on the island of japweed *Sargassum muticus*.

Keywords: *Marine Nature Reserve, Advisory Group, discussion topics.*

INTRODUCTION

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 welcome to attend meetings by invitation):

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

The Advisory Group was established in 1985 and until 1994 was known as the Lundy Marine Consultation Group. The Advisory Group has four main aims:

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 of the Marine Nature Reserve.

Meetings of the Advisory Group take place twice a year. In 1999 the meetings were held on 13th April and 13th October at the offices of Torridge District Council in Bideford. The agenda for each meeting varies depending on what matters are of current interest, but always includes a 6-month report from the Marine Nature Reserve (MNR) given by

the Warden (see Warden's Report elsewhere in this volume). Meetings of the MNR Management Group are planned to take place soon after those of the Advisory Group (wherever possible), 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 during 1999 took place on 22nd January, 26th April and 3rd November.

The main points which have been discussed by the Advisory Group during the year (other than those likely to be included in the Warden's Report) are summarised below:

a CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW JETTY IN THE LANDING BAY

There were various delays during the construction of the jetty which meant it was not fully operational until late in the summer. The impacts of the construction work, particularly of an increase in suspended sediment in the water column, were closely monitored by the Warden including the rockpools in the Devil's Kitchen. The one major concern followed the collapse of one of the legs of the smaller of the two jack-up rigs, when 250 gallons of diesel threatened to spill into the sea. Fortunately this situation was averted. In the light of this incident, the Environment Agency has provided the island with an 'Oil Pollution First Aid Kit' consisting of a small absorbent boom and various other items, which would assist with containing small spillages of oil/fuel in the near-shore zone.

It was agreed that, whilst tied up alongside the jetty, the flushing of on-board toilets from the M.V. Oldenburg (and other craft which did not have holding tanks) would not be allowed to take place. Currents in this part of the Landing Bay are weak leading to the slow dispersal of such material. Should such material be released, it would be particularly unpleasant for those snorkelling in the area or swimming from the nearby Landing Beach.

b REVISION OF THE MNR MANAGEMENT PLAN AND EN REGULATION 33 ADVICE FOR THE CSAC

The revised Management Plan for the MNR and the island's SSSI was distributed by English Nature (EN) at the end of March, and EN's formal Regulation 33 advice (under the EC Habitats Directive) for the Lundy Special Area of Conservation (SAC) was sent out to Group members at the end of September. The Regulation 33 advice was formally passed by EN's Council at the end of November. As an amendment to the Management Plan it was pointed out that there are in fact four "owners" of Lundy and its surrounding waters - the National Trust, Trinity House, the Crown Estate and the Church Commissioners, who own the Church, the acre of land to the south of the Church, and the Beacon Hill cemetery.

c FISHING ACTIVITIES

Four potting boats set pots during the summer months, mostly around the North and South ends and off the West side of the island. Some pots were also set close in off the East side of the island during the westerly gales in September. As many delicate and rare species are to be found close inshore off the East side of the island, concern was raised

by the placement of pots in this area. There had been some suspicion that an area of seabed on the edge of the Landing Bay had been illegally dredged, but this observation by a group of divers was later thought to be erroneous.

d BUOYING POPULAR DIVE SITES

In order to alleviate the amount of anchoring in certain areas by dive charter boats (and the disturbance this caused to the seabed), it was suggested that a small number of permanent buoys could be installed to which these boats could tie up. Whilst this seemed a good idea in theory, in practice it was realised it could prove problematical. Who would instal and maintain the buoys, chains and anchors? Who would be responsible if an accident should happen to a boat or person whilst the craft was tied up to a buoy? Certain wrecks sites were already buoyed on an 'unofficial' basis, but these were privately owned and the owners took no responsibility for the buoys. In the end it was decided that no new mooring buoys would be installed for the time being.

e FIRST SIGHTING OF JAPWEED

Dr Keith Hiscock reported that three attached plants of 'japweed' *Sargassum muticum* had been found between the new jetty and Rat Island during the summer. These are the first plants of this invasive non-native species to be found on the island, and the presence of this species, known to compete with native seaweed species, raises concern. It is possible they could have been brought to the island by the rigs used to construct the new jetty. No plants were reported from this area by the survey team undertaking the environmental impact assessment for the new jetty in March. A purposeful attempt should be made to prevent japweed becoming established at Lundy. This was one of the few situations where 'hands on' management could be used to keep the MNR free of a particular unwanted species.

f ELECTION OF NEW CHAIRMAN

Councillor Ian Knight of Torridge District Council, who had acted as Chair for the Group since 1994, stood down after the first meeting of the year. The position of Chair has been filled by Rev. Bill Blakey (representing the Lundy Church).

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.