

REPORT OF THE LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP 2000 & 2001

By

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ABSTRACT

The topics discussed by the MNR Advisory Group during 200 and 2001 are summarised. For 2000 they include amendments to the listed habitats within the cSAC description for Lundy; fishing activities; permanent mooring buoys; diving activities; an initial survey of the new jetty; and the new beach building. For 2001 they include revision of the Management Plan; a proposal for a No Take Zone off the east side of the island, fishing activities; diving activities; and overall co-operation.

Keywords: Marine Nature Reserve, Advisory Group, Management Plan, No Take Zone.

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 Biological Association (UK); 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.

2000

In 2000 the meetings were held on 11th April and 19th October at the offices of Torridge District Council in Bideford. The agenda for each meeting of the Advisory Group 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 2000 took place on 12th April and 20th October.

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 AMENDMENTS TO THE LISTED HABITATS WITHIN THE CSAC DESCRIPTION

In line with a review of the implementation of the EU Habitats Directive, a number of subtidal habitats has been added to the description of the Lundy candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) by English Nature. Initially the site had been proposed for its subtidal reefs, but the island's grey seals, its sea caves and its subtidal sediments have now also been added to the prescription. The Group was informed that the candidate SAC would become an SAC in its own right by 2004 at the latest, although the UK government would like to see designation taking place sooner than that. In law, cSACs are now being treated as if they were already SACs.

b FISHING ACTIVITIES

Lobster potting has been undertaken within the MNR throughout the summer, most of it occurring on the West Side with a little on the East Side. Towards the end of May a string of pots, clearly labelled with the boat's name, was shot very near the Knoll Pins. If they were not within the 100m exclusion zone then they were very close to it. Similarly, pots were shot by the same boat right on the edge of other exclusion zones. The skipper concerned was spoken to by officers of the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee to make sure he was aware of the no-go areas in the reserve. During June trawlers were seen working well outside the reserve off the East Side, and there was one boat from Newlyn fishing for porbeagle in the area.

c PERMANENT MOORINGS OUTSIDE THE LANDING BAY

Continuing the discussion started last year with regard to the buoying of certain popular dive sites, English Nature reported on a research project currently underway in the Fal looking at 'non-scouring' moorings and their effect on the seabed. If these trials proved successful, then English Nature would be willing to fund such a mooring for Lundy. The most useful location for one would be in Gannets' Bay, where divers often rest between dives around the northern end of the island. However, the installation and maintenance of such buoys was likely to prove problematical.

d DIVING ACTIVITIES

Diving around the island started towards the end of April and continued right up to the first week in October. Boats that brought divers out regularly were *Jessica Hettie*, *Lundy Murrelet*, *Our Unity* and *Sally Port* as well as the local dive groups from Ilfracombe and Appledore on *Brunel*, *Neptune*, *Frolica* and *Compass Rose*. Towards the end of the season the *Loyal Supporter*, a liveaboard, brought out several dive groups also. Several groups came across independently with RIBs, making it a busy year for diving. The Archaeological Diving Unit attempted to come out to survey the *Iona II* in the spring but were blown out completely. Then later on in the season the Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit came out to survey her and managed to get some preliminary work done before they too were blown out. The MCS group of divers fared a little better, as they too had to re-arrange their trip from early July to early September as a result of strong winds. Their group consisted of 8 divers on the liveaboard *Loyal Supporter*. They continued the study of the condition of sea fans along the east coast from previous years; searched (unsuccessfully) for red band fish burrows in the vicinity of the Knoll Pins; continued the count of yellow cup corals north of Gannets' Rock; and noted down the maximum depths of certain seaweeds (a study linked with water clarity).

e SURVEY OF MARINE LIFE COLONISING THE NEW JETTY

Dr Keith Hiscock undertook a brief biological survey of the new jetty piles during a visit to the island on 27th August. He noted that the jetty, constructed during the winter of 1998/1999, provides a new habitat for marine life at Lundy that is significantly different to any existing habitat. There are two main substrata – square section hardwood set into metal baseplates bolted into the seabed, and metal piles driven into the seabed. Other wooden beams, which act as fenders, extend near to the seabed. The areas of bedrock near to the jetty piles have communities that appear to be largely undisturbed by the construction, with a shallow forest of kelp and, notably, significant populations of the nationally scarce trumpet anemone *Aiptasia mutabilis*. The wooden piles themselves were colonised by small bivalve molluscs and by keeled tubeworms, amongst other encrusting organisms. The round metal piles had a similar array of organisms, with a few species of seaweed growing at around low water level. Significant numbers of spiny starfish were present too. Vertical struts between the piles were colonised by a fine filamentous hydroid. There were shoals of two-spot goby and large ballan wrasse swimming between the adjacent kelp forest and the piles. This survey was very brief and at a fairly early stage of development of the jetty pile communities. Certainly, additions to the biota can be expected, perhaps especially mussels which are typically late colonisers. The pilings offer an attractive habitat for fish species. The impact of building the jetty seems to be very local to the pilings.

The MNR Warden informed the Group that the amount of the invasive, non-native ‘pest’ species *Sargassum muticum* (known as japweed or wireweed) in the Landing Bay had increased markedly since it was first seen last year. It is thought to have arrived at Lundy by means of the rigs used for the construction of the jetty. It was agreed that its spread needed to be closely monitored and checked if at all possible. However, attempts to halt its proliferation elsewhere had usually failed.

f THE NEW BEACH BUILDING

Work on constructing the beach building started at the beginning of June and was all but complete by the end of September. The generator, compressor and winch were to be installed over the winter and lastly the interpretation materials would be put in place in spring 2001. The building blends in very well with the surrounding scenery. It will make an enormous improvement to the facilities divers are offered from next season onwards.

In 2001 the meetings were held on 19th April (the 14th such meeting of the Advisory Group and the 32nd of the former Consultation Group) and 18th October at the offices of Torridge District Council in Bideford. A new Chairman, Dr Keith Hiscock of the Marine Biological Association in Plymouth, was appointed for the October meeting. The agenda for each meeting of the Advisory Group 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 2001 took place on 20th April and 19th October.

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 REVISION OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE MNR/SAC

Kate Arnold of English Nature's Devon Team was in the process of revising the Management Plan for the Marine Nature Reserve (MNR)/Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (both areas share the same boundaries). It should be completed by the end of the year.

b A PROPOSAL FOR A NO TAKE ZONE OFF THE EAST SIDE OF THE ISLAND

A joint proposal from English Nature and the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee was put forward to introduce a No Take Zone (NTZ) off the east side of the island. The area in question would be bounded by a line running W-E from Seals' Rock at the NE Point and another running W-E from the Sugar Loaf (just north of the Landing Bay); by low water mark and by a line running N-S, parallel with the boundary to the MNR/SAC but approximately 250m west of this boundary. No species, whether commercial or non-commercial, would be allowed to be removed from within this area by any means, unless by special licence. It was envisaged that a NTZ would provide a number of benefits:

1. It would ease the fishing pressure on the MNR/SAC as a whole, allowing stocks of commercial species (primarily lobster and crab) a 'refuge area'. However, little potting activity takes place off the east coast at present.
2. Commercial stocks may be enhanced by individuals migrating from the 'refuge area' to the fished area. This had certainly been the case in other examples of No Take Zones from elsewhere in the world, particularly in New Zealand. It had also been suggested that the 'refuge area' could be

artificially seeded with young lobsters (this latter point is being considered by English Nature).

3. Species of high nature conservation importance present off the island's east coast would avoid disturbance from pots being set and lifted.
4. The No Take policy would affect all users of the area, thereby encouraging all to help in its protection.
5. The Zoning Scheme map could be made simpler.

The proposal was well received by the Group, although it was thought there may be objection to it by some commercial fishermen and possibly anglers. It was envisaged that consultation on this proposal would be undertaken during 2002 and that, if there was sufficient support for it (particularly amongst local commercial fishermen), a byelaw would be drawn up by the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee in due course.

c FISHING ACTIVITIES

Potting for crab and lobster was undertaken within the MNR throughout the season (April to September), most of it occurring on the West Side with a little on the East Side. There were four regular boats working the area. During June, five or six trawlers were seen working outside the MNR off the East Side. In July, a boat fishing to the north of the island (outside the MNR) had caught 80 sharks over a period of a week, including blue and porbeagle. Another boat fishing outside the MNR had caught and tagged 24 porbeagle sharks. The level of angling within the MNR had risen during 2001, from both the shore and from boats.

d DIVING ACTIVITIES

Diving around the island started in mid-May and continued right through until the start of October. The vast majority came out on charter boats (*Lundy Murrelet*, *Jessica Hettie*, *Our Unity* and *Sally Port*), with some arriving in their own RIBs. In addition, there were the regular visits from the local clubs (particularly those from Ilfracombe and Appledore). The new beach building has proved a great success – the Warden reported that filling air cylinders is now much speedier and easier, and the dive facilities (changing/storage rooms, compost toilet and kitchen) have been highly praised by the visiting groups which have used them.

e CO-OPERATION

At the March meeting of the Group, Paul Roberts (Lundy General Manager) made a point of saying how pleased he had been with the high level of support he had received from all members of the Advisory Group, during the period of much change on the island, especially with regard to the building of the jetty and of the

beach building. He welcomed this support and co-operation for the developments on the island, as it made his life and the lives of his staff much easier.

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.