

REPORT OF THE LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP

By

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ABSTRACT

The topics discussed by the MNR Advisory Group during 2003 are summarised. They include the designation of a No-Take Zone off the east side of the island; fishing activities; monitoring the reef features within the cSAC; moorings and re-drafting the Zoning Scheme.

Keywords: *Marine Nature Reserve, Advisory Group, No Take Zone, marine monitoring, Zoning Scheme.*

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. 'Membership' during 2003 consisted 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; Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Devon Sea Fisheries Committee; Devon Wildlife Trust; English Nature; Environment Agency; Hartland Heritage Coast Service; Landmark Trust; Local Dive Charter Interests; Local Diving Clubs; Local Sea Fishing Interests; The Lundy Company Ltd.; Lundy Field Society; Marine Archaeological Interests; Marine Biological Association (UK); Marine Conservation Society; National Trust; South-West Federation of Sea Anglers; Torrington 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 usually take place twice a year. However, in 2003 only one meeting was held on 10th April (the 18th such meeting of the Advisory Group and the 36th of the former Consultation Group).

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:

THE NO-TAKE ZONE

The No-Take Zone (NTZ) off the east side of the island officially came into being on 16th January 2003. It extends from high water mark seawards to the longitude N/S line of 4° 39.00' W (approximately 600-800m east of the island), the northern end bounded by a W/E line running from the NE Point and the southern end bounded by a W/E line running from the Sugar Loaf (see Figure 1). The NTZ covers an area of approximately 8 km² of sea and is governed by a Devon Sea Fisheries bye law which states that "for marine environmental purposes, no person shall remove any sea fish from the area".

English Nature (Press Release dated 19th July 2002) have stated that they hope the NTZ will have several long-term benefits including:

1. increasing populations of fish and shellfish stocks within and outside the closed area;
2. greater catches of fish for fishermen around the edges of the closed area;
3. increasing the wealth of marine life, recreating the natural ecosystem, and
4. increasing benefits to local economies from tourism, diving and research.

A monitoring programme to study the impact of the NTZ had been drawn up on behalf of English Nature by Prof. Callum Roberts of the University of York, the country's leading expert on NTZs. A consortium of marine biological consultants had been contracted to undertake the programme over the next three years (starting in 2004). It was pointed out at the meeting that, as very little fishing effort was

undertaken off the east side of the island, the benefits of introducing the NTZ may be quite difficult to determine.

FISHING ACTIVITIES

Up until the time of the meeting (April 2003), the Warden reported that no commercial fishing within the Marine Nature Reserve had been recorded over the winter period. Typically, potting activity (for crab and lobster) starts in the spring, particularly off the north and south ends of the Island and to a lesser degree the west side. There had been a small amount of angling from the new jetty (which lies outside the NTZ).

MONITORING OF THE REEF FEATURES WITHIN THE cSAC

A programme designed to monitor the condition of the reefs within the Lundy candidate Special Area of Conservation was initiated in 2003. Under the European Union's Habitats Directive, English Nature is obliged to undertake monitoring of a site's listed features¹ at least once every six years. The monitoring work is being done by a team of diving marine biologists who are also monitoring reef features within eight other marine cSACs in England. In response to these proposals, the Group as a whole raised a concern that if monitoring was carried out just once every six years, it may fail to pick up the more immediate signs of decline in reef communities, as recently indicated by comparative studies of the island's sea fans with other populations in the south-west (Irving, 2002 and Wood, 2003). It was agreed the Secretary would raise this matter with English Nature's Marine Monitoring Officer.

MOORINGS

It was agreed that a single permanent 'flexible' mooring be placed in Gannets' Bay as an experiment. This would allow charter dive boats (and others) to tie up to it between dives.

RE-DRAFTING OF THE ZONING SCHEME

English Nature plan to issue a new Zoning Scheme for the MNR/cSAC in light of the establishment of the No-Take Zone (see Figure 1). It was agreed that the 'refuge zone' be dropped and that the 'recreation zone' be extended northwards to the Sugar Loaf (thus abutting the NTZ boundary) and eastwards to Surf Point. This was agreed.

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.

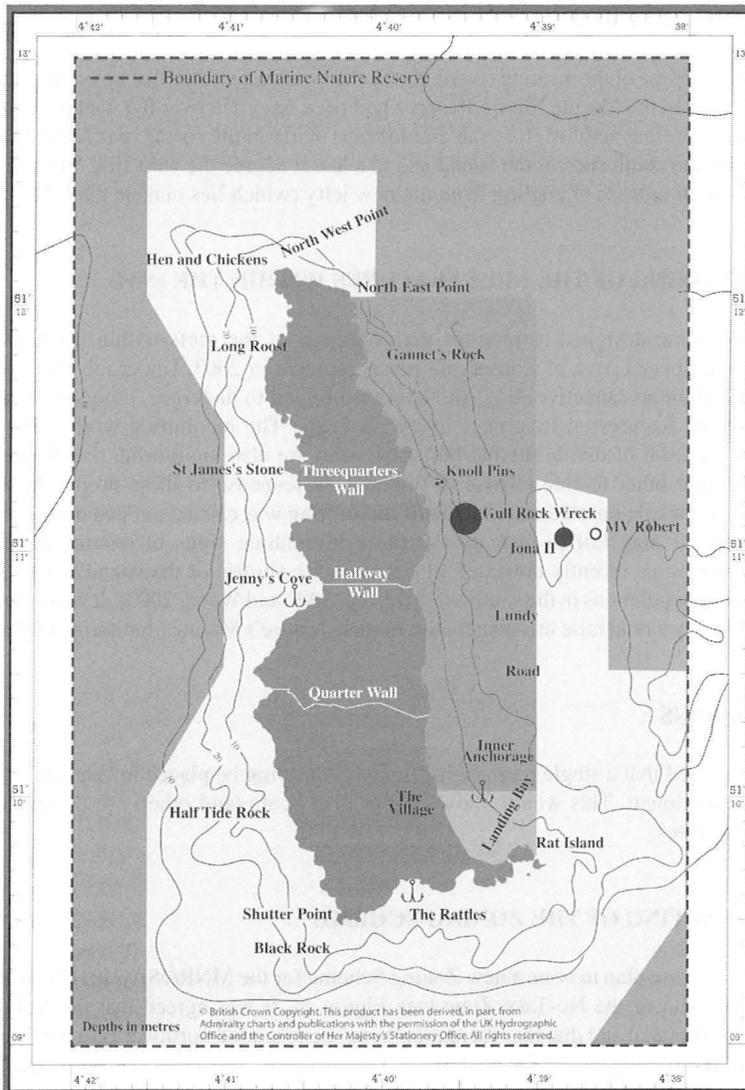


Figure 1. The Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Zoning Scheme (2003).

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REFERENCES

- Irving, R.A., 2003. Report of the Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group, 2002. *Annual Report of the Lundy Field Society* 52, 120-126.
- Wood, C., 2003. Pink sea fan survey 2001/2. A report for the Marine Conservation Society.

¹ Beside reefs, the other listed features for the Lundy cSAC are 'subtidal sandbanks', 'sea caves' and 'grey seals'. It has not yet been decided when monitoring studies of these other features will be undertaken.