

REPORT OF THE LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP

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ABSTRACT

The topics discussed by the MNR Advisory Group during 2006 are summarised. They include the No Take Zone, fishing activities, diving activity, the re-designation of the *Iona II* protected wreck site and a number of other topics.

Keywords: Marine Nature Reserve, Advisory Group, Special Area of conservation, No Take Zone, fishing activities, diving activity, protected wreck site.

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 2006 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; Devon Sea Fisheries Committee; Devon Wildlife Trust; English Heritage; English Nature (which became Natural England in October 2006); Environment Agency; Hartland Heritage Coast Service; Landmark Trust; local dive charter interests; local diving clubs; local commercial fishing interests; The Lundy Company Ltd.; Lundy Field Society; Marine Archaeological Interests; Marine Biological Association (UK); Marine Conservation Society; National Trust; North Devon Coast & Countryside Service; South-West Federation of Sea Anglers; and Torridge District Council.

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/Special Area of Conservation.

Meetings of the Advisory Group take place twice a year. In 2006, meetings were held on 20 April and 19 October (the 23rd and 24th such meetings of the Advisory

Group and the 41st and 42nd of the former Consultation Group) 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 six-month report from the Marine Nature Reserve (MNR) / Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (whose boundaries are shared), given by the Warden (see Warden's Report elsewhere in this volume). The meeting in April was the first to be attended by Nicola Saunders, the newly appointed Lundy Warden, to whom the Group offered a very warm welcome. Wherever possible, 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 during 2006 took place on 21 April and 20 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:

THE NO-TAKE ZONE

2006 was the third full year of the existence of the No Take Zone (NTZ) and saw a continuation of its monitoring. The results of the monitoring programme to date are summarised below:

1. All of the results so far suggest that the existence of the NTZ has been to the benefit (i.e. enhancing the conservation) of the marine life within it.
2. Within the NTZ, lobsters appear to have doubled in abundance (probably as a result of immigration of adult lobsters into the NTZ), and their size (carapace length) was slightly larger (than outside the NTZ or at the control sites).
3. None of the crab species (brown crab, spider crab nor velvet swimming crab) have shown significant changes in terms of abundance or size.
4. The size of individual scallops was found to be significantly larger within the NTZ and they were also more abundant. However, these differences are likely to have originated prior to the designation of the NTZ.
5. The greater size of populations of several of the epifaunal species being monitored, when compared to populations outside the NTZ, probably reflects the situation before the NTZ was established.

Unfortunately, a number of infringements took place within the NTZ during 2006 which are reported upon below. It would appear as though the policing of the NTZ requires reinforcing, together with a greater promotion of its aims, if such infringements are to be stopped (see Irving, in print).

FISHING ACTIVITIES

Apart from a small amount of shore angling (mostly from the jetty), there was no fishing activity recorded within the Marine Nature Reserve over the winter period (November 2005 – March 2006). The first pots were laid in early April and continued until early October. Between 10-16 May, the Warden reported a number of pots being sighted within the NTZ. On 16 May, a Fisheries RIB came over to the island to investigate and confiscated a total of 15 pots. No prosecution followed this incident

as it was not possible to identify the owner of the pots with certainty. Disappointingly this was not the first such infringement of the 'no take' policy, as a similar incident had occurred in 2005 which had also failed to result in a prosecution.

Angling from the jetty (which lies outside the NTZ) continued to be popular with visitors staying on the island throughout the year. There were a small number of reports throughout the summer of angling taking place within the NTZ. Visiting vessels were responsible for the majority of these and their occupants were genuinely apologetic once they were informed of their infringement. However, one vessel's occupants were defiant when told they should stop and they continued to fish, only moving on after some time. It was unfortunate that the Warden's RIB was not in the water at the time and could not be launched for technical reasons.

DIVING ACTIVITY

2006 was a busy year for diving with 32 dive groups and over 230 divers visiting the island between April and October. These figures do not include visiting day boats, such as Appledore SAC and Ilfracombe BSAC, and other day charters. Bad weather resulted in five cancellations of group bookings throughout the season.

RE-DESIGNATION OF THE IONA II PROTECTED WRECK SITE

In 2004, it was confirmed by marine archaeologists surveying the protected wreck site of the *Iona II* off the island's east coast that the centre of the wreck site did not align with the centre of the wreck itself but lay some 40 m away to the north. This meant that part of the wreck of the near-by *Robert* (a popular dive site which has not been designated) officially lay within the 50 m exclusion zone surrounding the *Iona II*. For this reason, the *Iona II* wreck site had to be re-designated, a procedure which officially took place on 6 June 2006. The centre of the site is now at 51° 11.0861 N 004° 38.8594 W, and there is an exclusion zone of radius 50 m around that point.

The English Heritage representative to the Advisory Group (Mark Dunkley) pointed out that, although the majority of divers were excluded from diving on the *Iona II* wreck site, it was possible for named individuals to apply for a visitor's licence to visit the wreck. In future, applications for these could be channelled through local charter boat skippers, Ilfracombe BSAC and Appledore SAC.

REVIEW OF THE MNR/SAC MANAGEMENT PLAN

Chris Davis of English Nature informed the Advisory Group in April 2006 that the existing Management Plan for the MNR/SAC ran for six years from April 2000 to March 2006. It was planned to distribute the revised and updated plan shortly for all Advisory Group and Management Group members to comment on.

THE CONTROL OF JAPWEED IN THE VICINITY OF THE LANDING BAY

The invasive brown seaweed *Sargassum muticum* (otherwise known as 'japweed') was first recorded at Lundy in 1999 (Reach 2001) and at the time it was feared it

would spread rapidly around the whole island. Fortunately, to date, it does not appear to have extended its range much beyond the Landing Bay. The curtailment of its spread may, in part, be due to the 'active management' measures which have been undertaken by divers since 2005 under the guidance of the warden and Dr Keith Hiscock of the Marine Biological Association. The measures have involved cutting plants at their bases and removing all of the biomass out of the water, at a time of year (early summer) before the plants have produced their spores.

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 Hon. Secretary of the Group, Robert Irving, at the address given above.

REFERENCES

- Irving, R.A. (in print). *Lundy's marine life – a balancing act of protecting and promoting*. Paper presented at the Lundy Field Society's Symposium 'Lundy Studies', celebrating 60 years of the Society. University of Exeter, 23 September 2006.
- Reach, I. 2001. The occurrence of the non-native brown alga *Sargassum muticum* and the red alga *Asparagopsis armata* at Lundy. *Annual Report of the Lundy Field Society*, 51, 113-115.