

## **REPORT OF THE LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP FOR 2007**

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 of the Advisory Group during 2007 consisted of representatives from the following groups:

British Sub-Aqua Club; Devon Sea Fisheries Committee; Devon Wildlife Trust; English Heritage; Environment Agency; 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 of the UK; Marine Conservation Society; Natural England; North Devon Coast & Countryside Service; South-West Federation of Sea Anglers; and Torridge District Council.

Interested parties in addition to those given in this list are welcome to attend the meetings of the Advisory Group by invitation.

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 Lundy Marine Nature Reserve/Special Area of Conservation. In 2007 the 'Management Group' changed its name to the 'Lundy Management Forum', in order to reflect its make-up of statutory and advisory bodies.

Meetings of the Advisory Group take place twice a year. In 2007, meetings were held on 23 April and 18 October (the 25th and 26th such meetings of the Advisory Group and the 43rd and 44th meetings 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 the matters that are of current interest, but always includes a 6-month report from the Marine Nature Reserve (MNR)/Special Area of Conservation (SAC), whose boundaries are shared. This is given by the Lundy Warden. Wherever possible, meetings of the Lundy Management Forum are planned to take place soon after the meetings of the Advisory Group so that relevant matters arising during Advisory Group meetings can be taken up and discussed at Management Forum meetings. Meetings of the Management Forum during 2007 were held on 24 April and 21 October. The main points which have been discussed by the Advisory Group during the year, other than those which have been included in the Warden's Report in this volume, are summarised in this report.

2007 was the fourth full year of the existence of the No Take Zone (NTZ) and saw a continuation of the monitoring of this area. However, the present funding from Defra for this monitoring programme will cease at the end of 2007. There is a possibility that further funding may be found, but, even if this happens, the monitoring studies are likely to be scaled down and may not take place on an annual basis. In 2007 the results of the monitoring programme continued to show that, simply put, the existence of the NTZ has been to the benefit of the marine life within it, enhancing the conservation. Whilst it has been difficult to determine which non-commercial species have benefited from the protection offered by the NTZ, the number and size of lobsters within the NTZ has continued to increase compared to those outside the area. It is thought this could be due in part to adult lobsters moving into the NTZ from outside and thereby avoiding capture. By way of contrast, the various species of crab which are being monitored, including edible/brown crab, spider crab and velvet swimming crab, all failed to show any significant change in terms of their abundance or size.

On 21 January, crew on board a 'rogue' Belgian trawler were observed angling within the NTZ and were instructed by the Warden to stop. Another incident of this kind happened on 16 June and on this occasion the culprits were on board a vessel which visits Lundy regularly. Another separate incident was observed on 13 August. On 2 September a potting vessel was observed hauling pots from approximately 150 m inside the northern boundary of the NTZ. Following an investigation by Devon Sea Fisheries Committee officers, it was found that the vessel's GPS had been incorrectly set up. The skipper received a strong reprimand but he was not fined.

These incidents show how vigilant the Warden and her assistants have to be in patrolling the NTZ. As the boundaries to the NTZ are not marked by any visible marks at sea, apart from appearing on GPS and paper charts, it can be difficult to determine if a vessel is inside or outside the NTZ boundary. Most of the incidents involving angling are attributable to ignorance of the existence of the NTZ by the individuals, but this is really not an acceptable excuse. The setting of pots within the NTZ is a far more serious breach of the byelaws and each incident requires investigation by the competent authorities such as the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee. In spite of these occasional infringements, the restrictions associated with the NTZ have generally had widespread overall support amongst the fishermen who visit Lundy regularly.

Between December 2006 and March 2007 no potting activity was recorded around the Island. However, by the middle of March several strings of pots had been set and with the spell of good weather in April the amount of fishing activity increased rapidly. High potting levels continued throughout the summer, with the activity beginning to decrease in October. Concern was raised over the poor marking of some strings of pots and particularly the use of small and inconspicuous buoys. On two occasions, commercial vessels had to rely on divers at Lundy to cut their propellers free from pot lines. The Warden requested that all pots should be marked with a clearly visible marker buoy, preferably with the vessel's name or number displayed on them.

2007 was another busy year for diving, with 32 dive groups and over 270 divers visiting the Island between April and October. These figures do not include visiting day boats, such as the Appledore SAC and the Ilfracombe BSAC, and other day charters. Bad weather resulted in seven cancellations of group bookings during the season. In addition, the reconstruction of the beach road meant that divers staying on the Island had to contend at certain times with some restricted access to the Divers' Beach and the beach building.

A proposal has been drawn up and costed by Dr Keith Hiscock to look into the issue of contaminants within the marine sediments and in a selected range of organisms. It was estimated that between £15k and £40k would be needed to obtain the required number of samples and for their subsequent analysis. If the funding for this proposal cannot be obtained, it is possible that the samples could still be collected and frozen, and then analysed at some time in the future if the necessary additional funding becomes available. Unfortunately, none of the potential funding bodies has yet been able to provide the funds that are required for this work to be undertaken.

Natural England has funded the completion of side-scan surveys around the Island, and also commissioned a study aimed at assessing the status of the sunset cup coral, *Leptopsammia pruvoti*, at Lundy. This study was undertaken during September. The work to re-survey the intertidal areas sampled in the 1940s had to be postponed until 2008 as the planned visit coincided with the closure of the Island that was caused by an infectious illness. New temperature loggers were installed at the end of the jetty and on the wreck of the MV Robert during the summer.

The Advisory Group was briefed on the changes which would, or might, occur if a Marine Bill were to be introduced by Parliament. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), which originally set out the terms for the establishment and management of the Lundy MNR, will be repealed and its byelaws, which are overseen by Natural England and the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee, will also be revoked. A transition period will make sure that there are no gaps before the introduction of the new legislation. Subsequent changes would probably include a change to the 'Marine Nature Reserve' title, possibly to become a 'Marine Conservation Zone', and the establishment of a 'Marine Management Agency' which would control all activities, other than fishing, such as recreation, licensing and moorings etc. Whilst the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee would still be responsible for fisheries matters, their title would be changed to an 'Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority'.

The possibility of installing new Seaflex moorings in the Landing Bay or at the Rattles anchorage has been discussed. These flexible moorings consist of four thick rubber cords rising from a two tonne sinker, joined to a single polypropylene rope to which a buoy is attached. The main advantage of this type of mooring is the reduction in the disturbance to the seabed because there is no chain to create the usual circular clearing around the sinker as a result of the actions of wind and tide.

It was reported that the distribution and abundance of the non-native brown seaweed *Sargassum muticum* appears to have increased during 2007 and its clearance has not been as successful as in previous years.

A series of new leaflets is planned which will follow the new 'house style' for Lundy reported by the Warden in this volume and a second edition of the popular diving guide will be produced which will include sections on rockpooling and snorkelling. A new DVD featuring underwater footage has been filmed.

I would like to thank Nicola Saunders, Lundy Warden, for her regular reports to the Advisory Group. Extracts from these have been used in the preparation of this Report. If members of the Lundy Field Society wish to have any matters of concern raised at future meetings of the Advisory Group, they should contact me as the Honorary Secretary of the Group at the address given at the beginning of this volume.

ROBERT IRVING  
August 2008