

## LUNDY GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

2011 will not be remembered as the best year that Lundy has ever enjoyed financially. With good weather days few and far between and the impact of the wider economy, we welcomed low numbers of day-trippers and other visiting ships. Subsequently our annual visitor numbers were low. Thankfully, property bookings held strong and ensured that the island remained financially buoyant, albeit marginally. Turnover for the year was projected at £2.2m to 31 March 2012. The year will mainly be remembered for a notable lack of rainfall and the challenges this brought.

Despite the lack of sunshine and rain, *MS Oldenburg* had a reasonable sailing season, with few cancelled sailings, bringing 14,869 visitors, staff and contractors across. The helicopter flew some 1,318 visitors through the winter months. Total visitor numbers were 15,519, including 10,335 day-trippers and 5,184 staying visitors.

Unfortunately both the *Waverley* and the *Balmoral* underwent extended periods in dry dock to effect extensive repairs and maintenance, and as a result they had a disastrous season in the Bristol Channel. This resulted in only one successful visit to Lundy from a scheduled 15, bringing our total number of visitors in 2011 to just under 17,000 against the previous year's 19,000.

Following our letting property refurbishments, bookings remained reasonably healthy with an annual occupancy rate of 85%, which remains constant. The coming year is showing similar strong forward bookings with 51% of properties already booked.

The winter helicopter service was again busy and we continued the development of the Hartland Point site with the addition of a new luggage bay to complement the recently built departure lounge.

*MS Oldenburg* enjoyed a good season and she continues to serve us well. She dry docked (pictured right) successfully at Sharpness again in November and, following survey, no major maintenance concerns were identified. Next year brings her five-yearly class renewal survey, which is more comprehensive. Following the life expectancy report we commissioned in 2010, we're confident that she will continue in service for the foreseeable future.



Despite the low numbers of day-trippers in 2011, staff numbers remained at 27 full-time, assisted by summer volunteers, ensuring that we were able to cope with the high number of property changeovers.

Changes to full-time permanent staff on the island were minimal. Sadly we said goodbye to Emily Francis, Deputy Housekeeper, and Assistant Warden Sophie Wheatley. However, we were delighted to welcome Sophie back following Nicola Saunders' move to work for Cornwall's Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA). Nicola served the island well during her six-year wardenship and I take this opportunity to thank her and we wish her well in her new role.

It is well known that Lundy has led the way for marine conservation in the UK over the past 40 years. To continue this and further support the aims of both Natural England and the island, we took the decision to strengthen the wardening role with two full-time positions. To this end, our other new warden, Derren Fox, joined us in January 2012. Derren brings extensive experience from the Orkney Islands, where he worked as RSPB warden, and more recently from his time with the British Antarctic Survey in the South Atlantic. Lundy is extremely fortunate to have such experienced wardens looking after the island's conservation needs.

Looking back at island projects in 2011, the new volunteer accommodation was the main focus, and this opened for guests at the end of the month. Our old faithful volunteer caravans have been removed and the site has been cleared, with further work done on restoring the boundary walls. The facility will enhance the volunteer experience beyond anything we've previously known and should encourage many more individuals to assist with the island's never-ending demands.

As well as enhancing the volunteer experience, the building will provide a base for our seasonal volunteer – now a permanent addition to our summer staffing. The role assists the Ranger, Steve Pratt, with running of the volunteer programme and practical works, as well as providing a stepping stone towards a future career in conservation.

The future of the church remains a concern and is under discussion with all stakeholders. A report commissioned to better understand the true condition of the building has identified that the whole building is in very poor condition, requiring major investment. Consequently, a project manager, Rob Harding, has been appointed to evaluate and lead on the possibility of funding. Rob has many years of experience of similar projects having worked for English Heritage. If the funding bid proves successful, it is envisaged that the restoration work, involving the complete removal and replacement of the roof, will be phased over several years. There is clearly a long way to go before the any works commence but it's reassuring to know that the future of the building is in good hands.

The farm had a testing year with the lack of rainfall, which meant extra work as for the first time in many years we had to import water as a precaution. Despite the challenge of farming on Lundy in drought conditions, all the animals had a good year and are doing well. It is sad to report however that Lundy Calloo has passed away at the age of 36. She had a good innings and served the island well.

The long-awaited Lundy Conservation Management Plan, completed in the summer, sets out the island's conservation strategy for the next 15 years. The document further supports an application to Natural England for Higher Level Stewardship, which will fund many island conservation initiatives for the next 10 years.

2011 brought several events to the island, the 40th anniversary of marine conservation in the waters around Lundy being one of the highlights. A reception for everyone involved over the past 40 years was held on board *Oldenburg* in Bideford on a fine evening in early July, at which both Keith Hiscock and Robert Irving were recognised for their contribution to the marine reserve.

With a new Lundy stamp issue due in 2012, we invited the art department of the local college to help us find a budding artist capable of designing a new set. Judging of the ensuing competition was held on board *Oldenburg* and Sarah Lewis from Bradworthy was chosen from the many entries. The new issue will be titled 'Historic Lundy' and is scheduled for launch in May.

Both the now well-established underwater photographic competition and the Clovelly to Lundy gig race were successful, but the annual Lundy Fly-in fell victim to poor weather.



Island staff continued to provide emergency cover for the fire, coastguard and ambulance services, and we benefited from the delivery of a new fire bowser (pictured arriving above) to replace the old unit which served us well over several years.

On the mainland, our shore offices were as busy as ever and the Lundy exhibition trailer and team visited all the local events and shows.

Looking to 2012, we're expecting a busy summer with several cruise ships planning to visit along with the *Waverley* and the *Balmoral*, and the tenth visit from the Devon Strut branch of the Light Aircraft Association – good weather permitting! Refurbishment of the lantern room at the top of the Old Light is due to start in April, and plans are being considered to tackle the dilapidated lower light.

The proposed Atlantic Array wind farm is an ongoing concern – the developers are still collating data and feedback to ascertain the potential impact on the environment. The process has been delayed and it is expected that there will now be a period of full public consultation.

Sadly, Landmark Trust Director Peter Pearce leaves next month after 16 years' service. Peter is moving to take a leading role with West Dean College, an educational conservation establishment in Surrey. He takes our best wishes and grateful thanks with him.

I'm sure 2012 will bring its own challenges to Lundy. While it seems that bureaucracy, development and red tape constantly try to change the shape of the island, we can be assured that no matter what changes lie ahead, Lundy will always retain that certain magic that continues to attract people looking to enjoy its unique tranquillity in an ever-changing world.

DEREK GREEN  
March 2011