

LUNDY MARINE PROTECTED AREA ADVISORY GROUP REPORT

Robert Irving (LMPAAG Secretary)

The Lundy Marine Protected Area Advisory Group (LMPAAG) provides a forum for the discussion of all matters relating to the island's waters and shores. The Group includes representatives from the Island (the Lundy Company/Landmark Trust), Natural England, the Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority (D&SIFCA), Historic England, Lundy Field Society, the Marine Biological Association, MARINElife, local nature conservation groups, commercial fishing interests, dive charter boat skippers, local dive clubs and local sailing clubs.

As we are all aware, 2020 was no 'normal' year. Instead of having our typical two meetings during the course of the year, one in the spring and one in the autumn, we cancelled the spring meeting entirely and held the autumn meeting online on 28th October 2020 via the video-conferencing platform Zoom, kindly hosted by Sarah Young of WWF-UK. Whilst the LMPAAG normally reports to the Lundy Management Forum, there were no meetings of that group in 2020.

The following topics were raised at the LMPAAG meeting:

Report from the island by Dean Jones, Warden

Dean gave a Powerpoint presentation from the island, encompassing the work he and his Conservation Team had undertaken relating to the MPA since the autumn of 2019. Most of what he said is covered elsewhere in this publication. Highlights had included the recent sightings of Bluefin Tuna breaching off the east coast and of a Thresher Shark off the west coast; the occurrence of a small number of Celtic Sea Slugs in Devil's Kitchen; and of large numbers (over a thousand) of moulting Spiny Spider Crabs and their cast exoskeletons which were being washed up on the Landing Bay shoreline. The Group were reminded of the Lundy Marine Facebook page, set up to register such records.

News from Natural England

Mel Parker (NE Marine Lead Adviser, SW) had been unable to attend the meeting in person though had informed the Secretary there was little to report over the past twelve months. She was disappointed that the Marine Festival and its associated marine surveys had had to be postponed. However, she recognized the amount of preparatory work that had gone in, and that the funding Natural England were offering was ring-fenced to support the marine surveys and so would be available when the Festival is able to be run in a couple of years' time. Some extra funding had been found to support management of the MPA this year, to be used to pay for the Wardens' time to complete some of the intertidal surveys that will keep the long-term data sets on Lundy up to date. Natural England is very interested in the Compass Tool approach to MPA management (see mention below) and will work with others to see how this can be applied to Lundy so that the site and its users can benefit.

News from Historic England

Hefin Meara, Historic England's representative on the Advisory Group, confirmed that in November 2019 the wreck of the *South Australian* had been designated a Scheduled Monument. Lying approximately three miles off the island's North East Point at a depth of approximately 43 m (below Chart Datum), the wreck is actually outside the MPA boundary. The Group was informed of the ship's history by Keith Denby, a member of the Ilfracombe & North Devon Sub-Aqua Club and the person who had led the research into identifying the wreck. Since its discovery by club members in the mid- to late 1980s, it had been known as 'the railway wreck', on account of its cargo of railway track and rail fishplates. According to Historic England's designation notes: "The *South Australian*

was a composite-hull clipper ship that voyaged annually between London and South Australia for about 20 years, carrying passengers and goods. She was built at North Sands, Sunderland in 1868. She sank on 14th February 1889 while on a new passage from Cardiff to Rosario, Argentina."

Keith Denby explained that the wreck makes for a difficult dive, only suitable for experienced, technical divers (i.e. those trained in breathing mixed gases), as the site is deep (at about 50 m once tidal height is taken into consideration), dark and hazardous (it is affected by strong currents).

News from D&SIFCA

Lauren Parkhouse (D&SIFCA Environment Officer) also pointed out that the pandemic had affected working practices within the Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, with all staff having to work from home. The one issue that might be of interest to the Group was the tagging of Spiny Lobsters (the Lundy MCZ's only listed feature) off the South Devon coast. The IFCA were particularly interested in the increase in numbers of Spiny Lobsters throughout the South West in recent years and were asking divers to pass on sightings information to them. Members of both Ilfracombe and Appledore sub-aqua clubs confirmed the number being seen around the island was continuing to increase, as was the size of individuals.

News about the Lundy Marine Festival

Robert Irving explained what had become of the Marine Festival which was due to have taken place over three months during the summer. Sadly, the pandemic and its consequences (primarily the shut-down of the island) meant that a decision was taken on 18th March 2020 to 'suspend' the planned event. It was hoped that the Festival will now be held during the summer of 2022, though confirmation of this will not be made until later in 2021.

Looking ahead: making the most of WWF's Compass Tool for MPA Management

Robert Irving had taken the opportunity during lockdown to investigate the outcome of WWF's Compass Tool assessment, a form of opinion poll undertaken during summer 2018. The Tool consists of a series of questions asking respondents to rank the perceived completeness/incompleteness of steps during the evolving life of an MPA. The results had shown Lundy to have fared well in some categories but poorly in others. It was these latter categories which required looking into to see if any improvements could be made. The main issues appeared to centre on money matters: (1) the long-term funding of the MPA; (2) separate income generation to assist with (1); and (3) a lack of infrastructure/equipment needed to manage the site. Unfortunately, now was not the best time to be addressing such issues, but the exercise had proved useful and it was hoped it could be picked up again once life had returned to something like normal.

Highly Protected Marine Areas – an update from Defra

We were very pleased to welcome Dr Jen Ashworth (currently leading Defra's team on Highly Protected Marine Areas) to the meeting. She kindly explained the outcomes of the report on HPMA's which was published in summer 2020, following a six-month study led by former environment minister Richard Benyon. Keith Hiscock, Chair of the Lundy MPA Advisory Group, had made representations to this study some months previously. Lundy's No Take Zone could be viewed as the equivalent of a small HPMA (i.e. no extractive activities whatsoever), so the outcome of this study was of interest to Group members. The main finding of the study was that "HPMA's are an essential component of the MPA network and that the Government should introduce them as soon as possible within Secretary of State waters" (that is, English inshore and offshore waters and Northern Irish offshore waters).

Dr Ashworth was also able to inform the Group that, despite the UK leaving the EU at the end of 2020, there would be no change in the status of SACs (designated under EU legislation) by Defra post-Brexit, although all such sites would thereafter be known as Marine Protected Areas.

*If there are any matters which LFS members would wish to have addressed at the Advisory Group meetings, Robert would be happy to raise them on your behalf:
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