

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, the 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.

The spring meeting of the Group was, once again, held on-line via the video conferencing platform Zoom, kindly hosted by Derek Green, on 4th April. The autumn meeting took place in person at Ilfracombe Dive Club on 3rd October. Robert Irving, in his role as Secretary to the Group, reported on what had been discussed to the two Lundy Management Forum meetings on 5th April and 5th October 2022.

Below is a summary of topics that were raised and discussed during both Advisory Group meetings.

Reports from the island

Items of particular interest to group members, presented by General Manager Derek Green and the Warden, Rosie Ellis, included the following:-

- The jetty underwent an upgrade in the winter of 2021/22, with many of the wooden fenders being replaced and all the fixtures and fittings (including three emergency ladders) being replaced too. A commercial dive team was required to complete certain aspects of the work, which cost in the region of £100k. A new diving compressor was installed in the Boat Building at the foot of the jetty in June.
- Rosie, who was congratulated on becoming the new Warden last November following the departure of Dean Jones, reported that a survey of the Grey Seal population in early April revealed a total of 186 individuals being counted – a high number for this time of year. Later in the year, an autumn count of seal pups recorded 42 in total – last year (2021) a record number of 62 were recorded. Re-surveying of the intertidal cup corals in the Devil's Kitchen in the spring showed significant increases in the numbers of Scarlet and Gold Star corals *Balanophyllia regia* and of Devonshire cup corals *Caryophyllia smithii*. A new sea water temperature logger had been installed at the end of the jetty and a second unit was ready to be installed on the wreck of the MV *Robert*.
- The Marine Festival had kept Rosie busy, off and on, for much of the summer as mentioned later in this report. Other subjects raised during the October meeting included avian flu and revisiting the Code of Conduct leaflet, particularly in light of seal disturbance.

News from Natural England

Sophie Hare had taken over the role of overseeing Lundy's SAC and MCZ from Mel Parker towards the end of 2021. Following support from Natural England for MSc students to include fieldwork at Lundy, several studies took place during the summer months. Meaghan Kendall (University of Exeter) investigated the disturbance to hauled-out seals by visiting charter boats. Another study by Jordan Williams (University of Plymouth) looked at the presence of dolphins and porpoises

around the island during July; a third by Cherry Leung (Exeter) looked at the impact of non-native algae on native algal species; and a fourth (Exeter) investigated how the island deals with its litter. The Natural England dive team had hoped to undertake the condition monitoring of circalittoral rock and vertical rock communities within the SAC in early September. However, poor weather meant that they only dived at the island on one day (at Brazen Ward and at the Knoll Pins), with the rest of their time spent diving out of Ilfracombe at sites within the Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ. A condition assessment for the Lundy SAC is due to be completed in the near future.

Following a period of consultation regarding the establishment of a first tranche of Highly Protected Marine Areas around the country (of which Lundy's No Take Zone could be considered a forerunner), by October it was announced by Defra that five sites were being proposed, with just three of these (all offshore sites) being designated by the end of the year. As part of the consultation process, a recommendation that the NTZ at Lundy be extended was proposed by Keith Hiscock, but this was not taken up.

Natural England were pleased to have been able to sponsor the Marine Festival this summer, allowing for the production of a new display about the 50 years of the Lundy MPA, and a reprinting of the Lundy Marine Wildlife Guides, first issued in 2011.

News from D&SIFCA

There was little news to report on IFCA matters relating to the Lundy MPA during the year. The only relevant issue related to a review of commercial diving permits for collecting scallops. Although the collection of scallops is banned from the island's NTZ, it is still permitted outside the NTZ. Scallop collecting by hand is far less destructive to the seabed than using dredges. Interestingly, and rather alarmingly, recreational divers are allowed a maximum take of 25 scallops per day, whereas a permit for commercial divers allows a maximum of 2,400 per day!

News from Historic England

The licensing system for divers to visit either of the island's two protected wrecks was explained to charter skippers and to others, following some confusion which had arisen linked with the reporting system currently in place. Licensees were categorized as being either 'principal' (such as the Lundy Company), to whom 'additional' licensees registered with the principal licensee should notify the names of divers visiting the wrecks; or simply as independent 'additional' licensees', whose divers had to be named to HE directly. The reporting process could be submitted after dive(s) had taken place at either site. Over the course of the summer, 33 dives had taken place on the *Iona II* between 15th June and 22nd August 2022; with 6 dives undertaken on the Gull Rock site between 9th June and 8th July.

Historic England were pleased to have been able to sponsor the Marine Festival this summer by hosting four Protected Wreck days (hosted by the Nautical Archaeology Society); funding a photogrammetry project which provided 3D images of both Protected Wreck sites; reissuing a guidebook about the *Iona II* and writing a new leaflet about the HMS *Montagu*.

News from the N. Devon Biosphere

The Marine Wildlife Aware Accreditation Scheme run by the North Devon Biosphere was re-launched on-line on 4th March 2022. This course, which has been classroom-based in the past, has been designed and run by former Lundy Warden Beccy MacDonald-Lofts. It is based on the national WiSE accreditation scheme (www.wisescheme.org). During the Group's second meeting in October, it was pointed out that the on-line version of the accreditation scheme was

not working properly, so the information it contained was not accessible. Derek Green agreed to pass this feedback back to the Biosphere team.

Your Input

If there are any matters which LFS members would wish to have addressed at the Advisory Group meetings, I would be happy to raise them on your behalf: robert@sea-scope.co.uk

The Lundy Marine Festival

An account of the Marine Festival written by Robert is a special feature in this year's Annual Report and follows this LMPAAG report (Ed.).



▲ *Filming the Snorkel Safari at the Old Jetty during the Marine Festival (photo: Rosie Ellis).*