

# ISLAND REPORT 2024

*Derek Green – Managing Director, the Lundy Company*

2024 will primarily be remembered for poor weather during the peak summer holiday season and extended work completed to MS Oldenburg.

Despite fine weather in May, June and July, constant poor weather through the peak summer months of August and September took its toll on our visitor numbers. The Island's total attendance was 15,443 passengers arriving by either ship or helicopter, including 9,025 day trippers and 5,440 staying visitors. While this was an increase on 2023, we must remember that the island received no day trippers in April or May 2023, due to the Oldenburg remaining in dry dock for an extended period following the flooding in winter 2022/23.

From Oldenburg's 101 scheduled sailings, we suffered a two-week delay to the start of the season because of another overrun in dry dock (see below). Bad weather also forced 26 complete cancellations and 10 'splash and dash' afternoon sailings on which day trippers could not travel, meaning that all in all, the ship didn't have the best season. The winter helicopter had a steady season. Of the 37 flights scheduled over the winter, five were affected by weather cancellations (mostly fog), so an average year.

Staying visitor numbers for the year were on a par with 2023, as our properties remained popular. Property occupancy as a result remained high at 88% for the calendar year – a slight drop from 2023 when we reached 90%. However, we must remember that 2023 contained many bookings that had been brought forward from the COVID years, so was a bit of an anomaly.

The most popular properties on the island remained Old House North, Castle Cottage and Radio Room, all booked for 98% of the year. It was pleasing to see that the Lundy Vestry was booked for 77% of available nights, having come fully online at the beginning of the season.

▼ The Vestry (photo: Carole Anne Lee).



Staff retention over the 2024 season remained steady with some changes. Notably, we welcomed first officer Andy Hall to the bridge of the Oldenburg and on the island, the Maintenance team welcomed some new faces with Richard Goodman, Ian Bushell and recently Engineer Tristan Howe and their respective partners joining the team. Tara McEvoy-Wilding and Matt White also joined the island's conservation team.

Oldenburg had a frustrating year with new gearboxes fitted in February and subsequent problems with the prop shaft seals during sea trials leading to replacements having to be fabricated in Spain. This latter issue resulted in the two-week delay mentioned above in returning to passenger service in April.



▲ Oldenburg in Sharpness dry dock (photo: James Williams).

Given the age of the ship and the mechanical issues over the last few years, we took up an invitation from Harland and Wolff, the local shipyard in Appledore, to explore a programme for future replacement when the time finally comes. We had an interesting day looking at potential plans for an Oldenburg 2, and also discussed time frame and estimated costs.

In tandem, we have also commissioned naval architects to report on the ship's current life expectancy and to present both the Landmark and National Trusts with a clearer idea of what a future maintenance programme along with the expected costs may look like in the short and long terms. The report is due in spring 2025.

At the end of the sailing season Oldenburg returned to Sharpness for her annual dry docking where we continued with the deck replacement programme, which this year was focusing on completion of the after deck and surveys of both the top boat deck and fore deck.

Work to complete the after deck was completed and thankfully, required works identified to the boat deck were found to be minor. However, following shot-blasting, large sections of the foredeck were found to need replacing, which resulted in most of the steel being replaced over the first quarter of 2025. As a result of this, the ship did not return to Bideford until the middle of March. At the time of writing, she is busy being prepared for the forthcoming season.

During the five months that the Oldenburg has been at Sharpness we have been well supported by the Severn Seas Shipping Company, a local company whose sturdy coaster, the Mair, has been carrying out weekly supply runs to the island, topping up fuel levels and bringing back waste and livestock. We are extremely grateful to Anthony and Tim for their ongoing support.



► The Mair (photo: Derek Green).

On Lundy, there was a focus on improving the Island's power system. Enabling works funded by the National Trust were completed over the winter, with a view to adding renewable energy to the system in 2026. The Island's three main generator sets and their associated control systems were overhauled, along with the installation of a new heating boiler and upgrades to the main heating loop.

In January the main PLC (Programmable Logic Controller) and generator control units were replaced with state-of-the-art units, which have allowed increased flexibility and provided stable power across the island. As part of the same project, we have also introduced new energy efficient storage heaters in Little St. John's as a pilot. Their performance is currently being monitored for future upgrades across many island properties. There are also plans afoot to run another pilot project in Stoneycroft from September 2025 with the introduction of an air source heat pump. Plans for adding renewable energy are underway and we are currently beginning the process of submitting a planning application for a small wind turbine, a solar PV array, and a new battery and inverter house, which collectively are expected to provide 85% of the island's energy needs, and which we hope to install in 2026.

### **Lundy's Renewable Energy Project**

In tandem with the power upgrades, energy conservation in our properties was also a focus for the island's maintenance team, when we replaced many of the windows in our letting properties with purpose-built double-glazed units made by local firm Robeda Joinery. The new windows have reduced heat loss and draughts in many properties including Castle Cottage, Hammers, Little St Johns, Big St Johns, The Barn, Quarters, Bramble Villas, Paradise Row and The Barn flat. New single glazed units have also been installed in the offices of the Marisco Tavern.

The Island's water supply is always a concern, but with a new water tank recently installed, the reservoir is now much larger. To support the system we have also appointed a new contractor, Hydra-Tech of Holsworthy, to look after and service our water treatment plant. They have carried out several improvements to the control system of the water treatment system, and also installed a new "Scavenger" unit to take the peaty colour out of the water – although the water is potable, this has been a longstanding issue, as many visitors will know. As a result, the water quality is much improved across the island.

There have been lots of other maintenance projects completed and improvements made to properties following constructive feedback from regular visitors.

- Tibbetts – Replaced the boiler and completed external landscaping
- Millcombe – Replacement boiler, external decorations and improvements to the track
- Castle Cottage – New furnishings and double-glazing units. Refurbished shower
- Stoneycroft – New furnishings
- The Barn – Refurbished shower
- Bird Observatory Hub – Completed
- Vehicle Shed – Preparatory works to steel frame completed ahead of roof refurbishment
- Bramble Villas – Stabilisation works to bank
- Marisco Tavern – New commercial flooring throughout
- Beach Building – New Interpretation boards thanks to the generosity of a legacy from the late Rachel Penny

In addition to all these works, St Helen's Church has a new lightning conductor finally installed, thanks to the (ongoing) stalwart efforts of the Lundy Field Society's working parties. The Vestry has had an internal makeover, and it is pleasing to see that the external landscaping has been completed, following the refurbishment of the building.



▲ St Helen's Lundy (photo: Derek Green).

The farm had a challenging year. Following an extremely wet winter and the reduction in Oldenburg sailings due to bad weather, sheep could not be transported off the Island, leading to an unusual increase in their numbers. As a result, much work was needed to repair and reinstate the island's iconic dry-stone walls and boundaries. With the end of Single Farm Payments and other subsidies on the horizon, the island has taken the opportunity to review the Farm Management Plan in preparation for the submission of a new Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement with Natural England. This is expected to bring changes to stock levels across the island and see an increase of cattle along with a large decrease in the number of sheep. It's expected that there will also be a reduction in the feral stock numbers, which have crept up continuously since COVID. Collectively, this will mean a heavier focus on nature and conservation and be a very positive move for the island. If successful, it will take a few years to implement the changes.



We had to replace / refurbish several Island vehicles last year as some of them came to the end of their useful life, having served the Island well in the harshest of marine environments. The Island's main cargo tractor, along with the fire tender, fire bowser, fuel bowser, the Coast Guard buggy and the Island R.H.I.B. were all replaced or refurbished. Shipping the heavier vehicles proved quite a challenge but thanks to Harland and Wolff, who assisted with their landing craft, we were able to complete the swap over.



▶▶ New Lundy RHIB (top) and cargo tractor (bottom). Both photos: Derek Green.

There were several events held over the year on the island, and we had visits from regular cruise ships over the season, including the iconic paddle steamer Waverley, visiting from her home port of Glasgow. While in the region, she took the opportunity to sail up the Torridge to Bideford for a rare visit. In July, we hosted the annual Lundy Trail run: a gruelling half marathon which takes 250 hardy runners three times around the island. In August we held our 24th fly-in, the annual rally for small aircraft. While most of the pilots arrived safely, one unfortunate aircraft landed a little bit too heavily, breaking one of the wheels off, which resulted in it remaining on Lundy for some months before it was able to be repaired and flown off. Thankfully there were no injuries other than to the pilot's pride.

At Hartland Heliport, there was work to do following winter storms and we took the opportunity to refurbish the exterior of the building, including new double-glazed windows. Internally we gave the departure lounge a makeover along with installing a new set of lovely interpretation boards.

The Shore Offices had a busy season. Despite our new online booking system taking over 60% of day trip bookings, there were many refunds to be processed with so many cancellations. A new Friends of Lundy scheme along with a new Marisco Club membership scheme was launched, both of which were an instant success with lots of existing and new members joining. To promote the new schemes, a new web page was launched early in the year

As we moved into 2025, the Lundy Postal Service issued its biennial offering of new stamps. This year we took the opportunity to celebrate Lundy's renewed membership of the Bird Observatory Council with five new stamps featuring Lundy's iconic birds. The set was designed and painted by local artist Sharon Read with assistance from trusted philatelic adviser Lars Liwendahl.

This year also marks the 60th anniversary of the Landmark Trust. Thanks to the generosity of one of our patrons, we will shortly have on offer a special anniversary whisky aptly named 'Auld Light'. There are 144 limited edition bottles, which we anticipate will be snapped up in short order by the whisky aficionados among you. For those less keen on whisky, the General Stores will be stocking a new 'Lundy Letterbox Game', based on our well-loved Lundy letterbox trail.

Looking ahead to 2025, we have many projects lined up. Together with the extensive renewable energy project, there are major works to the vehicle workshop roof in planning, and we hope to complete the exterior decoration to Millcombe and fit a new microgrid system in Tibbetts.

The Shore office is working on a project to bring period return travel tickets online for bookings by the end of the summer. Also in development is a new Marine Protected Area (MPA) website in partnership with members of the Lundy Marine Protected Area Advisory Group, so lots to be getting on with!

In summary, it's been a challenging and busy year all round with the weather dictating our fortunes as always. However, we've endured, and made significant progress across the piece, with the ship and Island power in much better shape. We are looking forward optimistically to a better weather year in 2025.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all the Lundy team for their ongoing commitment and support: everyone on the island, the crew of the Oldenburg for their continual perseverance at Sharpness, the Shore Office teams, and the Ground Crew at Hartland. My grateful thanks go out to every one of them, who are all vital cogs in a (hopefully!) well-oiled machine.

I'd also like to thank the Lundy Field Society for your ongoing support over the last 12 months and wish you a successful 2025. We look forward to welcoming you to Lundy!