

LUNDY MARINE PROTECTED AREA ADVISORY GROUP REPORT

Robert Irving (LMPAAG Secretary)

The Lundy Marine Protected Area Advisory Group (LMPAAG) provides a forum for 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 and Severn Inshore Fisheries and 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 and local dive clubs. For the first time, the Marine Management Organisation was represented at the Group's second meeting of the year.



The Group holds two meetings each year. In 2025, the spring meeting took place on the evening of 7 May and the autumn meeting took place on 20 October, both hosted at the Clubhouse of the Ilfracombe Sub-Aqua Club in Ropery Road, Ilfracombe. Attendance was either in person or remotely on-line via MS Teams. This second meeting was the 22nd for the Advisory Group in its present guise and the 79th since its first meeting as the Lundy Marine Consultation Group back in 1985. The Advisory Group now has a new logo, as shown at the top of this page.

In my role as Secretary to the Group, I report on the key points raised at these two meetings to the Lundy Management Forum (consisting of all organisations with responsibility for the overall management of the island), at Forum meetings which take place soon after each of the aforementioned Advisory Group meetings.



Below is a summary of stand-out discussion points that were raised during both of the Advisory Group meetings held in 2025.

Behaviour of visitors interacting with seals

An ongoing concern for the Conservation Team has been the continuing disturbance of seals by visiting swimmers, snorkelers and divers. Incidents have included causing resting seals to be flushed from the rocks and pursuing seals in the water (usually to obtain photographs). It was suggested a reminder, possibly in the form of a poster which could be displayed in the cabins of visiting charter boats, could be sent out to all visiting charter boat skippers, including mention of a new Code of Conduct for water users. Help with this was offered by the North Devon Biosphere representative. It was also suggested a QR code could be added to each of the proposed new eco-mooring buoys, with the code linking to the new Code of Conduct.

◀ This is the life: a young grey seal lounging in a yacht's tender
(Photo: Martin Barrett)

The re-appearance of two missing temperature loggers

Having searched high and low for two missing sea water temperature loggers which had been brought up from the seabed and downloaded by the warden towards the end of 2021, they were eventually found hiding behind the Warden's desk! While their captured data could be downloaded, they were not in a condition to return to the sea. Fortunately, the Field Society has funded replacements for the two loggers, which should be in place ready for 2026.

New MPA website launched on 1 August 2025

A new website for the MPA, lundyMPA.org.uk, was launched on 1 August 2025 – World Marine Protected Areas Day. The content and layout of the site was by Robert Irving, with behind-the-scenes technical aspects completed by Chris Dee. The site provides a large amount of information about the MPA which up until now has been confined to various reports, brochures, minutes and unseen photographs and videos. Funding for the website build costs were shared between the Lundy Field Society, Historic England, Blue Marine Foundation, Natural England, National Trust, The Landmark Trust and North Devon Biosphere.

Natural England's involvement with the MPA's management

Having had no member of the NE staff to deal with Lundy marine issues since Sophie Hare left in 2022, we were pleased to hear of the appointment of Megan Hayward-Smith as their go-to person for all marine conservation issues to do with Lundy.

It was pointed out that there are 53 MPAs within the south-west (Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly), all of which Natural England have to manage (albeit with the help of other authorities). We like to think that the Lundy MPA, being the longest established in the country and the only one with a history of being a statutory Marine Nature Reserve, deserves continuing support.

Report from the Devon & Severn IFCA

There had been little to report concerning fishing and fisheries off the north Devon coast, according to our Devon & Severn IFCA representative. However, we were informed that the Lundy MPA lies within the Bristol Channel Approaches Special Area of Conservation (which extends from the north coast of Cornwall across to the south coast of Wales), which has the harbour porpoise listed as its sole feature. Deliberations between English and Welsh statutory bodies regarding which fishing methods may or may not be permitted within the SAC have been ongoing for almost two years now – not due to disagreements but because there has been so much information needing to be gathered about the site.

Report from the Biosphere Reserve

Lundy is being proposed as a 'core area' of the North Devon Biosphere Reserve, which has been welcomed by the island authorities. Besides greater recognition for Lundy's nature conservation and community values, this step will allow for joint bidding for various projects.

The Biosphere's Marine Wildlife Accreditation Scheme has been revamped. The Scheme trains and awards accreditation to boat operators who act as marine wildlife guides along the north Devon coast (including at Lundy). The revamped scheme now requires re-training on an annual basis, with attendance indicated by a sticker bearing the year of accreditation to be displayed on the boat in question. There were 35 attendees for the two training sessions held in March 2025, in Appledore and in Ilfracombe.

Comparisons between the Lundy MPA and the Skomer MCZ

Ties between the Marine Conservation Zone around Skomer (off the Pembrokeshire coast) and the Lundy MPA were strengthened when Keith Hiscock, Chair of the MPA's Advisory Group, was invited

to attend the May meeting of the Skomer MCZ Advisory Committee. Keith reported back that Skomer and Lundy have very similar marine communities. One main difference between the two, however, is that the Skomer MCZ is far better funded than the Lundy MPA: they have a full-time marine warden with three part-time assistants (employed by Natural Resources Wales); a hardboat (*Skalmay*); and the wherewithal to undertake a whole host of annual monitoring projects (including underwater ones).

Sadly, Keith learned that Skomer's pink sea fans appear to be suffering a reduction in abundance and damage by entanglement from the tendrils of bull huss eggs in a similar way to those at Lundy, although it is not yet known if the cause for their reduced numbers is the same. It is hoped that close ties between the two sites can be maintained and strengthened in future.

Ongoing concern over the condition of much of the marine life at Lundy

For at least 25 years now, Keith has been concerned that the marine life at Lundy has been suffering in some way, leading to his conclusion that many benthic communities appear dull and far less vibrant than they did during the 1970s and 1980s. During the May meeting, he explained he was at a loss to know why this should be. He was particularly vexed by Natural England's last assessment that was made (at the end of 2022) of the condition of the various named sublittoral features and sub-features of the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which were assessed as being in 'favourable condition'. In his opinion, their overall status might be better described as 'poor'.

Films showing what the Lundy MPA has to offer

Showings of the film *Safeguarding Our Seas: Lessons from Lundy* about the MPA's No Take Zone during the summer of 2025 took place on 8 June (World Oceans Day) at Braunton, on 16 and 17 August at Croyde during the open-air *Save The Waves Film Festival*, and on 6 September as part of the *Plough Earth Film Festival* at the Plough Arts Centre, Torrington.

In addition, a short (12 min) film was completed in the autumn, taking viewers on a tour around the wreck of the *Iona II*, one of the island's two Protected Wreck sites. The narrated film explains the short life of the paddle steamer *Iona II* and uses 3-D imagery of the wreck site to explain why the wreck is considered of such historical importance. The video can be viewed on the MPA's website (lundyMPA.org.uk/resources/video shorts about the Lundy MPA). Special thanks to Robert Irving, Tim Clements and Derek Green for their contributions to this project, which was funded by Historic England.



▲ A scale model of the paddle steamer *Iona II*
(photo: McLean Museum and Art Gallery, Inverclyde Council)

Lundy's No Take Zone features in 2025's 'A' Level Geography syllabus

As part of the 'A' Level Geography syllabus in 2025 for Year 13 students in England (EDUQAS Examination Board), one topic under 'Global Governance of the Earth's Oceans' was '*Laws and agreements regulating the use of the Earth's oceans in ways that promote sustainable economic growth and geopolitical stability*'. There were four study options to choose from: the Great Pacific Garbage Patch (marine litter); Shark Bay in Western Australia (a UNESCO World Heritage Site); the Gulf of Mexico (characterised as being 'a dead zone'); and the No Take Zone within the Lundy Marine Protected Area (which benefits fishermen catching 'spill-over' lobsters around its fringes). It's great that our efforts are being recognised and merit international significance.

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.