

# Notes of the 15th meeting of the Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group

(formerly known as the Lundy Marine Consultation Group, of which this was the 33rd meeting)

held on **Thursday, 18th October 2001** in the Meeting Room,  
Torridge District Council Offices, Riverbank House, Bideford at 7.00 p.m.

*Present:*

Chris Mandry	(CM)	British Sub-Aqua Club/Ilfracombe S-AC	
Clive Pearson	(CP)	Charter skipper: <i>Jessica Hettie</i> , Clovelly	
Royston Johns	(RJ)	Torridge District Council	
Keith Hiscock	(KH)	Marine Biological Association	Acting Chair
Liza Cole	(LC)	Lundy Warden	Acting Secretary
Mike Williams	(MWi)	Environment Agency	
Keith Bower	(KB)	Devon Sea Fisheries Committee	
Maurice Woodger	(MWo)	Charter skipper: <i>Our Unity</i> , Ilfracombe	
Don Burke	(DB)	<i>Our Unity</i> , Ilfracombe	

1. *Apologies for absence:* Robert Irving (Lundy Field Society & Marine Conservation Society); Steve Waring (Royal Historic Monuments of England); Paul Roberts (Landmark Trust); Kathy McGough (Devon Wildlife Trust); Andrew Moulton (Hartland Heritage Coast)

NB. Both Jo Crix (JC) and Kate Arnold (KA) have recently left EN and so there is no maritime presence in Devon office at present.

2. *Notes on the last meeting, held on 19th April 2001:* Acceptance of these was proposed by RJ and seconded by CM. They were signed by KH.
3. *Matters arising:*
  - a. **Moorings:** has there been any movement on this? LC said not aware of any as Jo Crix was dealing with this, but were awaiting results of trials in Fal estuary. KH asked whether they were a good idea, and were they actually needed? LC explained reasoning behind idea, that all vessels are asked to anchor as little as possible and fishermen asked not to pot, so the fact that dive boats are allowed to regularly anchor at the same sites is hypocritical and could be causing extensive damage. General discussion followed as to whether boats anchor that often; anchoring on sand is OK but in kelp beds may well cause damage. Was there any evidence of damage? CP and KB were concerned about public liability and insurance. In general the feeling of the group was that there is no need for moorings.
  - b. **No Take Zone:** in the absence of JC and KA, KB updated the group of the situation. There was a meeting on 2/8/01 where it was agreed to draft a new byelaw or modify an existing one to create an NTZ. The NTZ area would extend from Seal Rock to Surf Point and out to the boundary of the reserve. Agreed that EN would make a financial contribution to this. JC had suggested that in recompense for the loss of a fishing area, reseedling of lobsters into the NTZ would take place to improve the surrounding fishery. However, with JC leaving English Nature, there is no maritime contact in EN (Devon). KB had tried to get hold of Roger Covey (Maritime Conservation Officer, Cornwall Team) but had not been successful. [Action point LC to find out who contact is in EN and to get this moving if possible]. Extensive discussion followed. CP asked why was a total NTZ required, as how would a little angling have an effect on either the fishery or the vulnerable ecology? LC explained that it was felt it had to be a no take for *all* parties using the area. It was suggested at the last MNRAG meeting that the jetty be exempt and all agreed that what was the difference between fishing off the jetty and taking

? No, I don't think so - only 1/2 way off E. coast.

fish from a boat. Also, how could you police for example a yacht catching a couple of fish for tea. LC suggested that perhaps the boundary could extend from Seal Rock to a point to the north of the Landing Bay, such as the mile markers or other obvious reference point. It was agreed that this would be the preferred option. The recommendation of the meeting to the Management Group was that there should be a universal ban on all forms of take between Seal Rock and an agreed reference point at the north of the Landing Bay. This should be linked to a programme of monitoring, starting with collection of baseline data, to assess the effects on the fishery, the vulnerable species and to assess compliance. Collection by scientists would be by licence only. KH asked about any flexibility in changing the byelaw(s). KB said that once they are in place they are difficult to revoke. KH also asked about the genetic difference between the lobsters that will be used for the reseeded (from north Cornwall) and those at Lundy. KB stated that there was minimal genetic difference.

c. KH asked if anyone had collected records with respect to the ORCA survey information that he had sent around to all AG members especially sightings of triggerfish and sunfish. MWO and CP stated that there were lots of dolphins around this season. MWi stated that marine mammal data was of special interest in the area. A general discussion as to the best method of collecting records ensued. CP said that a phone line would be the most convenient. KH will try to organise this for next year. MWi stated that all data from various schemes are collected together via the NBN (National Biodiversity Network).

d. MWi asked for an update on the Management Plan. LC stated that KA had completed it before leaving and that it was being printed at present and would be circulated to all members.

4. *Matters arising from last Management Group meeting:* in the absence of EN staff, LC went through the minutes. Most topics had either already been discussed or would be covered in LC's report from the reserve. However, the subject of appointing dive skippers and local dive clubs as voluntary wardens needed to be taken further. [Action point for LC to raise this at the Management Group meeting].

5. *Report from the reserve (presented by Liza Cole):*

5.1. Assistant Warden: Ian Reach began his third year as seasonal Assistant Warden on 8th May and finished on 8th October. As in previous years his presence has been invaluable and has greatly improved the quantity and quality of wardening work carried out on the Island.

5.2. Fishing and potting activity: There has been fishing activity in the reserve throughout the season. Potting boats seen working the area have been *Compass Rose II* (M78), *Better Days* (CF43), *Walrus* (WY1) and *Palantine* (FY149). One boat shot pots right on the cusp of the exclusion zones on the East Side (including very close to the Knoll Pins). They were spoken to by DSFC.

In June, 5 or 6 trawlers were regularly seen working outside the reserve.

In July a rumour reached me that *Stephanie* had been sharking off to the North of the Island and had caught 80 sharks including blue and porbeagle. I don't know how reliable this rumour was in terms of numbers but interesting information nevertheless. (CP said that the rumour was true, 81 sharks had been caught over a period of a week. Also, that he had been fishing for shark outside the reserve and had caught and tagged 24 porbeagles including one up to 200lb).

The amount of angling in the reserve has increased this year both from the shore (particularly the new jetty) and from boats. Boats seen angling in the reserve were *Jessica Hettie*, *Hooker*, *Osprey* and *Lady Gail*. In June one boat was seen returning wrasse to the sea dead. I spoke to the skipper who said he did target wrasse in order to show these beautiful fish to his customers but endeavoured to treat them very carefully and return them unharmed to the water. Both Ian and I try to speak to all those angling from the shore and ask them to return slow breeding and territorial fish to the water unharmed and not to collect bait from the shore.

5.3. Diving Activity: The main diving season started in mid-May there was a continuous flow throughout

the season until the beginning of October. The vast majority came out on the charter boats (*Lundy Murrelet*, *Jessica Hettie*, *Our Unity* and *Sally Port*) with some coming out on their own RIBs. In addition, there were the regular visits from the local clubs. On the whole, not an overly busy season but a steady flow.

The beach building has proved a great success. Blowing bottles is now a much speedier and more pleasant process and the dive facilities (changing/storage rooms, compost loo and kitchen) have been greatly praised by visiting groups who have used them.

**5.4. Grey Seals:** Seals have been active all around the Island all through the season. In August Gweek Seal Sanctuary contacted me to ask if they could release an adolescent male seal in the reserve as it was hauling out on St Ives beach and they were worried that a member of the public might be bitten by it and was taking the bait off long-liners in the area. It was agreed that it could be released as long as it had a clean bill of health and so they brought it over and it was successfully released in Jenny's Cove. However, the MNR waters cannot have been to its liking as it was seen almost back at St Ives 2 weeks later!

The first seal pups were seen on 29/8/01, one at the north end and one at the south end of Halfway Wall Bay. Other sightings of pups were one in Seal's Hole (11/9/01), one at north end of Halfway Wall Bay on 27/9/01, and one in Devil's Kitchen on 5/10/01. Four dead pups were also reported: one on 24/8/01; one on 29/9/01; and two on 9/10/01. Plenty of courtship behaviour witnessed and one pair continued to mate in the Landing Bay even though the Warden had a snorkelling party in the water not too far away! On 19/9/01 a dead adolescent female was found washed up in Devil's Kitchen. There was no evidence of fatal injury, in fact the seal was in excellent condition. She had a tag in her back flipper and London Zoo was contacted as indicated. They suggested that the seal might have been caught in a cave or similar during the very high tides and high easterly winds and drowned (large volumes of water came out of nose when body was moved). They will pass the report onto SMRU who tagged the seal.

**5.5. Cetaceans:** There have been 3 sightings of cetaceans from the Island this quarter: a "very large" pod of unidentified cetaceans off Goat Island (3/7/01); 12-15, possibly bottle-nosed dolphins off the North End (30/7/01); and 25-30 common dolphins (including 7-8 young) swam along the East Side, into the Landing Bay and off southwards (29/8/01). This last pod even rode the bow-wave of the Datchet which was carrying the party that were gathering footage for the new MNR video, so they will be recorded for posterity!

**5.6 Basking sharks:** Basking sharks arrived very late this year, the first sighting being on 11/8/01. In total 38 beasts were seen, 35 in August and 3 in September. The last sighting was on 14/9/01. On at least two occasions sharks swam right up to the jetty and on one of these there were 267 people, including the press, waiting to board the boat. So what was missing on quantity of sightings was made up by quality! The Oldenburg also had numerous sightings on the journey over to the Island.

**5.7. Seabirds:** In May a team led by the RSPB came to the Island to carry out a comprehensive survey of breeding Manx Shearwaters based on the preliminary work carried out last year. This was done by laying tape recordings of calls (both male and female) into all the suitable burrows around the Island and mapping those where there was a response from within the burrow. An infra-red camera was used also to look into these occupied burrows. By this method they estimated that there were 150 occupied burrows, the first time a definitive count has been done. Following this work Mike Bell, an international expert on pest control on islands, came to Lundy to monitor the rats and to undertake a feasibility study as to whether it would be possible to eradicate rats from the Island if it was deemed appropriate. He proved that there are rats all over the Island and that although it would be difficult to eradicate them, it would be possible.

The Assistant Warden carried out puffin monitoring from May until the first week in July using the same fixed observation points as have been used over the last 5 years. The maximum number of birds seen was 26 with an average of 18 over the season. These numbers were up on 2000 but down on 1999. From these results and observations made by both Wardens over the breeding season it appeared that no burrows were being used in Jenny's Cove, but they were at St Philip's Stone and there were

more birds present around the North End including Gannet's Bay.

5.8. Littoral Survey: In May Jo Crix and Kate Arnold came to the Island to finish setting up littoral transects at various sites around the Island (assisted by me and Ian), work that was started last autumn.

5.9. *Sargassum muticum*: This non-native seaweed has now spread northwards from the jetty on to reefs off the Landing Beach. Both Ilfracombe and Appledore SACs have been looking out for it also on their dives all around the Island but have not seen it outside the Landing Bay. The MCS group that visited the Island at the end of July kept an eye for it also and attempted to map the area covered in the Landing Bay.

Towards the end of the season Keith Hiscock asked Ian and I to keep a look out for another non-native invasive seaweed, *Asparagopsis armata*, in the reserve. We saw it under the new jetty both attached to the substrate and floating free. Ian suspects that there may also be the *Falkenbergia* phase in the vicinity but this will need further investigation.

5.10. Raising Awareness: There has been a lot of exciting things going on this season to raise visitors' awareness of the marine environment. The usual walks, talks and snorks have been as popular as ever and Ian and I accompanied boat trips around the Island as often as time would allow. There has also been plenty of media interest with coverage on regional and national TV and radio as well as a lot of coverage in various diving and other publications.

The project that has had the biggest impact on providing visitors with information has been the interpretation area in the beach building. The interpretation was installed towards the end of May and even before the workmen had finished visitors waiting to get back on the *Oldenburg* were reading the panels and playing with the interactive displays. Throughout the season it has continued to be a great success with the 2m aquarium being one of the favourite attractions. When weather conditions were clement the doors were left open all the time as this made the building more welcoming for visitors to enjoy whenever they wanted to, including those who visited on yachts etc. The interpretation works so well that it soon proved a waste of time for either Ian or myself to go down and see the boat off in case people had questions. This has freed up time that we used more fruitfully elsewhere.

Another exciting project has been the new MNR video for playing on the *Oldenburg*. The contract was awarded to a team from Sea-scope who came over to the Island in August to collect footage. They had a very successful week and saw everything they were hoping for, including common dolphins which rode of their bow wave. I just found out yesterday that the video is finished and is winging its way towards me as I speak. From some of the rushes I saw, it should be a very impressive film.

The contract for a Dive Guide for the reserve has been awarded to Paul Kay, a renowned marine photographer who has some exciting ideas concerning format and content. Local dive clubs and skippers have agreed to help out by providing advice and information particularly where the dive site maps are concerned.

Other projects in the pipeline include a curriculum pack for the Island and interpretation boards for inside and outside both Shore Offices, for the *Oldenburg* and Ilfracombe aquarium. All these projects have been funded by English Nature.

5.11. Maintain free access to the MNR: This year we have had an Estate Worker on the Island carrying out a lot of practical conservation work including footpath work. His presence and hard work, with assistance from volunteers, has mean that all the footpaths around the Island are now in a much better state of repair and are kept much clearer of vegetation. This means that visitors have far better access to enjoy the MNR.

5.12. Off wintering: Lastly, I will be spending the winter off the Island this year as there are so many projects in the pipeline that need me to be able to have regular meetings with various people. I will be coming off the Island on 2nd November and will be based at the Bideford Shore Office until March 2002. Contact details: tel (01237) 470 074 or 423 233; fax (01237) 477 779; mobile (07771) 838 524. The e-mail address is warden@lundyisland.co.uk.

6. *Activities:* KH asked LC to report on the work carried out by the MCS volunteers during their visit in July. In the absence of RI, LC informed the group that they had continued the on-going inspection of seafans at sites off both the east and west coasts; undertaken a survey of colonisation of the jetty piles (including photographs); retrieved, downloaded and re-positioned the temperature logger on the *Robert*; assessed the spread of *Sargassum* on the north side of the Landing Bay; and re-taken monitoring photographs of the Knoll Pins 'cave'.

KH informed the meeting about the moribund seafans that had been seen around the Island. He had asked RI and the MCS team to inspect all seafans they encountered to see if they could discover the cause. It turned out to be a small mollusc called the poached egg shell feeding on the living tissue of the fans. RI collected 2 specimens that were sent to the MBA in Plymouth but unfortunately were dead on arrival. KH obtained a licence and collected one moribund seafan to study in his aquarium. It appeared to recover somewhat but also was fed upon by cushion stars. KH remarked that seafans are effected by lots of factors (abrasion by dogfish eggs, poached egg shell snails as well as cushion stars) so that it is difficult to know exactly what is going on. He also encouraged all diving the reserve to send him observations. CM mentioned that Kim Howell, the Tourism Minister, had visited the Island in the summer on *Frolica* and was very taken with Lundy.

7. *Any Other Business:* KH mentioned the various marine initiatives in the pipeline e.g. marine stewardship, the marine bill. KH asked for it to be minuted the group's thanks for the support and funding from English Nature and all the work done by Jo Crix (especially) and Kate Arnold during their time in post. He also extended this thanks to LC and Ian Reach. KB made the group aware that cable laying would be taking place in the Bristol Channel starting on 20/10/01. The vessels involved were Dock Express 20 and Havilla Real. Contact is Jim Hodder on 02380 677 662.
8. *Date of next meeting:* Thursday 18th April 2002, same time (7 pm), same place (Riverbank House, Chanters Lane, Bideford).

  
18/4/02