

LUNDY MARINE PROTECTED AREA ADVISORY GROUP

The Aims of the Group are: 1) to provide a nucleus of expertise on the marine habitats and waters surrounding Lundy; 2) to provide a forum for exchanging views on present and proposed activities around Lundy; 3) to safeguard the interests of all those who use the waters around Lundy and its natural resources; and 4) to advise the Management Forum for the island.

Established: 1985

Please reply to the Hon. Secretary:

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Minutes of the 19th meeting of the Lundy Marine Protected Area Advisory Group

(formerly known as the Lundy Marine Conservation Zone Advisory Group, the Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group, and originally the Lundy Marine Consultation Group, of which this was the 76th meeting)

held on **Tuesday 7th May 2024** at 7.00 pm.

at Ilfracombe & N. Devon SAC Clubhouse, Ropery Road, Ilfracombe EX34 9EF

Present:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Initials</u>	<u>Representing</u>
<i>In person:</i>		
Keith Hiscock	KH	Marine Biological Association (Chair)
Robert Irving	RI	Lundy Field Society (Secretary)
Derek Green	DG	Lundy General Manager
Andy Bell	AB	North Devon Biosphere
Maggs Ashton	MA	Ilfracombe Sub-Aqua Club
Shaun Galliver	SG	Ilfracombe Sub-Aqua Club
Amanda Gartshore	AG	Ilfracombe Sub-Aqua Club
Terry Newman	TN	Historic England
Chris Blackmore	CB	Sea Watch Foundation
Sharron Blackmore	SB	Sea Watch Foundation

On-line:

Jo Parker	JP	Warden, Lundy Conservation Team
Tara McEvoy-Wildling	TMW	Assistant Warden, Lundy Conservation Team
Mike Deaton	MD	Appledore Sub-Aqua Club
John Balls	JB	North Devon Fishermen's Association
Judith Tatem	JT	North Devon Coastwise

1. Welcome (KH)

KH welcomed all to the 19th meeting of the Lundy MPA Advisory Group. The start of the meeting was delayed by 10 minutes while a few technical aspects were sorted out. This was to be the first meeting held both in person and on-line (via Teams), so was somewhat experimental in nature. Fortunately, all seemed to go well, although the sound did drop out and the video froze on a few occasions.

KH thanked Lyndsey and Derek Green for setting up the on-line Teams meeting (by sending out the meeting invitations and for acting as 'host' for the meeting); and Maggs Ashton of the Ilfracombe Sub-Aqua Club for arranging for the use of the room and for allowing us to use their large screen TV, allowing the on-line participants to be seen and vice-versa.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from: Ben Bengy (charter boat skipper, *Barbara B*), Lauren Parkhouse (Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority), Chloe Nunn (Marine Co-ordinator, Biosphere Reserve), Theodora Stephens-Manassieva (UCL MSc student) and Christine Goodall (Natural England). KH explained it was concerning that Natural England had been unable to have a representative present, in light of Sophie Hare moving to a new NE post last autumn, but that Christine Goodall had explained the organisation did not have the human resources available at present to do so. DG added he was expecting a terrestrial-oriented NE person to attend Thursday's Management Forum meeting on the island. AB also added that, as far as the Biosphere was concerned, NE's inability to become involved in local matters was indeed concerning, as the lack of input is starting to have an impact on a number of projects.

3. Minutes of the last meeting (held at the Ilfracombe & N. Devon SAC Clubhouse, Ilfracombe) on 17th October 2023.

A pdf of the minutes had been circulated to all members via email and printed copies were made available to those present. KH asked if anyone had any corrections they'd like to see made to the minutes. None had and so the minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. Matters arising

- 4.1 KH asked if RI had contacted the editor of the Porcupine Marine Natural History Society's Bulletin with regard to seeking a pdf (or pdfs) of the various articles which resulted from the Society's involvement in the Marine Festival. RI explained he had done this and had sent out the single pdf of all of the articles and was a little bemused why KH had not received it. He would be happy to send him a copy.
- 4.2 KH also asked if RI had received any report from Natural England in light of their absence at this meeting. RI said he hadn't, although he had been in email contact with N. Devon team leader Christine Goodall, asking her if a representative could attend this meeting. He had received an IFCA update from Lauren Parkhouse.
- 4.3 KH added that he had been tasked with discovering how the monitoring of condition of the subtidal reef feature with the SAC was evaluated and how the status of 'favourable condition' (as opposed to 'unfavourable condition') was determined. This was following the outcome by Natural England of their last assessment, carried out after just one day's diving in September 2022. During the Marine Festival, a group of Porcupine Marine Natural History Society divers (several of whom were experienced marine biologists and who had had four dives off both the east and west coasts in July 2022), noted that some of the seabed species appeared to be in poor condition. KH has spoken with Ian Saunders and James Highfield (who are on the assessment team at Natural England) but without obtaining a 'straight answer'. He has also been in contact with Christine Goodall, pointing out that the condition of the Lundy SAC's subtidal rock feature should not be evaluated as being in 'favourable condition'.

Part of the problem might come from 'shifting baselines'. KH is able to draw on his considerable experience of what he witnessed in the 1980s with regard to the condition of certain key species within the (voluntary) marine nature reserve. However, Natural England's 'official' baseline dates from 2004/05, when the first

monitoring of the SAC's subtidal reefs was undertaken¹. As by way of an example, this latter date was four years after the pink sea fans around the island were almost wiped out by a bacterial disease². KH believes that there are also issues relating to the sites which Natural England have chosen to visit and which species they have chosen to evaluate.

With no representative of Natural England being present, KH pointed out that he knew they were coping with many other issues at the moment so he had some sympathy for them. One such issue seemed to be, in association with the MMO and the IFCA's, stopping bottom trawling from damaging the seabed in other MCZs. However, he would continue to chase Natural England with regard to their overall attitude towards the monitoring of seabed species and communities within MPAs.

- 4.4 RI had recently received a pdf of the MSc research dissertation by Theodora Stephens-Manassieva of University College London on the governance of the Lundy MPA entitled *Ship-shape and Bristol fashion: an MPA success story in the Channel*. As this study had particular relevance to this Advisory Group, he read out the following two paragraphs from the Abstract:

“Over-extraction, habitat destruction, biodiversity loss, pollution and climate change all threaten the health of the ocean. In response to these threats, there has been growing recognition of the need and value of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). How MPAs are governed, and through what mechanisms, remains an important question to determine the efficacy of protection. The aim of this research is to explore the governance effectiveness of the Lundy Island MPA. Lundy Island holds a venerated status, established over 50 years ago and protected by several important designations. Qualitative data were gathered from a wide variety of constituents using semi-structured interviews, ethnographic participation and observation, underpinned by discourse analysis. The Marine Protected Area Governance (MPAG) framework was then applied to assess how effectively the MPA is being managed. The research revealed that Lundy is managed through a top-down, government-led approach, but one that is greatly reliant on local leadership, in particular. Statutory bodies and government agencies have played a central role in Lundy's management, which has been supplemented with partnerships with other key actors, such as fishermen, scientific researchers and business operators.

Given its location, Lundy is considered 'low risk' by relevant authorities – it is assumed that Lundy experiences fewer pressures and is therefore less vulnerable or sensitive than other Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs). As one interviewee put it, “it is simply ticking over”. Acute lack of funding is a huge challenge which impacts a number of areas, including monitoring, implementation of the Management Plan, and enforcement. Funding should also be used to address these areas and to commit to long-term monitoring plans that would add to an already bountiful archive; it would inform others as to what a protected marine environment could – and *should* – be like, compared to other MPAs around the country. Thinking about its history as ‘the first’ of everything, the next challenge for Lundy's MPA managers and users will be to define what it could be the first at next.”

The pdf of this study is very large (47 MB) but RI would be happy to send it on (via WeTransfer.com) to anyone who would wish to see it.

- 4.5 DG wished to add that, linked to the marine environment around the island, a recent survey of the seabirds has found that their numbers have gone from strength to strength. As from February 2023, the island has been re-appointed as a Bird Observatory and part of the network of Bird Observatories of the UK. The number of

¹ See: Mercer, T., Howson, C. & Bunker, F. 2006. Lundy European Marine Site Sublittoral Monitoring Report 2003/04. Unpublished report to English Nature (Peterborough) by Aquatic Survey & Monitoring Ltd., Bollilhope, Co Durham.

² See: Hall-Spencer, J.M., Pike, J. & Munn, C.B. 2007. Diseases affect cold-water corals too: *Eunicella verrucosa* (Cnidaria: Gorgonacea) necrosis in SW England. *Diseases of Aquatic Organisms* 76:87-97.

breeding seabirds the island supports (25,000 Manx shearwaters or 95% of England's breeding Manx shearwater population; 1,335 puffins; and over 150 pairs of breeding storm petrels), means Lundy is now internationally important for its breeding seabirds and is one of England's largest seabird colonies. Indeed, these numbers exceed the thresholds for designation of the island as a Special Protection Area (SPA).

Last year, the RSPB notified Natural England that the island now qualifies for SPA designation, which would provide further recognition of its nature conservation importance in light of upcoming floating offshore wind developments³. DG explained that there were now moves afoot to invite the Minister for Nature, Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane MP, Cons.) over to the island in the summer. It is hoped that the forthcoming general election (due to happen at some time before January 2025⁴) may prove the necessary incentive by the present government to approve another SPA. DG went on to say a further designation for the island could only help with seeking funding for the MPA in the future.

5. Island happenings during the past six months (DG)

- 5.1 The *Oldenburg* went into dry dock at Sheerness in the second week of November 2023 and it was a fairly straightforward visit. Further sections of the afterdeck were replaced though it will take a further two years to complete this task. In addition, all the various statutory checks were made and passed. The ship then returned to Bideford over Christmas but needed to return to dry dock at the beginning of February to have her gearboxes changed. The new ones were hand-made in Germany with a six months' lead-in time. However, on commissioning, testing of these required that the ship be run at full throttle in both forward and reverse for a minimum of 30 minutes whilst tied-up alongside. Unfortunately, one of the seals on the prop-shaft blew whilst in reverse gear. This meant another visit to the dry dock (already occupied by two other vessels). New seals had to be made (in Spain) and these were then fitted. The consequence of all this was that the start of the season was missed by two weeks. As it turned out, the weather during this missed two weeks at the start of April was poor, so 80% of those sailings might not have taken place anyway. *Oldenburg* crossings to/from the island then started in mid-April.
- 5.2 Attendance figures for visitors to the island last year (2023) were lower than the previous year (2022), largely due to the *Oldenburg* being out of service due to the flooding of the engines whilst in dry dock and a resulting loss of 3 months being in service. The total attendance for the year was 13,774 people visiting Lundy, consisting of 7,225 day-trippers (11,400 in 2022); and 5,624 staying visitors (5,589 in 2022), a considerable portion of whom were flown over by helicopter. The bulk of the downturn was for day-trippers during April and May when the *Oldenburg* was out of service. Over the winter, the helicopter service transported just under 1,400 people from Hartland. The level of occupancy of the 24 letting properties was 91% during 2023, with the Vestry (2-person) now being the latest property that can be booked on-line.

³ It is interesting to note here the current investigation (launched on 18 March 2024) by the Office for Environmental Protection into whether Defra and Natural England have failed to comply with environmental law relating to SPAs on land [note not coastal or at sea] (see <https://www.theoep.org.uk/news/oep-launches-investigations-special-protection-areas-wild-birds>).

⁴ Since the meeting, the Prime Minister, on 22nd May, announced the general election would take place on 4th July. Paul St Pierre of the RSPB has informed RI that although the Minister's office accepted the invitation to visit Lundy (on 30th July), this is now unlikely to go ahead.

- 5.3 The new on-line ticketing system for day-trippers, as reported at the last meeting, has proved successful. This year so far, 66% of day-trips have been booked on-line through the app, freeing up some time for the Shore Office staff and replacing the booking service offered by the local tourist offices which acted as Lundy booking agents. It's hoped this service will be expanded this year for staying visitors too.
- 5.4 Over the winter, there's been a lot of maintenance and training for the staff. During January and into February when the island was closed to visitors, a detailed survey of the island's electrical system was undertaken. This involved engineers from Barnstaple and Glasgow being on the island for a couple of weeks. There also some more work done on the generators (fine-tuning), with one more visit planned for next week to replace two alternators and the boiler. That will then conclude Phase 1 of the 'green' decarbonisation programme.
- 5.5 Staff changes. Matt Stritch (Ranger) and his partner Jo are leaving after a few years on the island; carpenter Nick and his partner Polly are also leaving after a number of years; and a couple of general assistants (Koby and American Meghan) are departing. Vicky, who worked in the Ilfracombe Shore Office last year, will be joining the team again this year; and Lyndsey in the Bideford Shore Office is being joined by Laura.
- On the island, six members of staff are leaving and, so far, another four have been recruited in their place. Tara McEvoy-Wildling (who was one of the volunteer Marine Festival Wardens) has been appointed as Assistant Warden; and her partner Matt (known on the island as Roger in order to distinguish him from various other Matts!), who has been a volunteer Ranger for the past two summers, has been appointed the island's Ranger. Richard Goodman (and his partner Olivia) is back as a maintenance engineer, a new chef has also been appointed, and a new general assistant Fleur Goodwin.
- 5.6 The RIB has been taken off the island and is in Exeter undergoing a re-fit. This is going to turn out to be more expensive than DG expected. The plan is to get it back to Lundy a.s.a.p. as both JP and TM-W have now completed their RYA Powerboat Level 2 training. At the moment, it's not yet clear when it'll be back on the island.
- 5.7 DG explained it was good to see the island returning to some level of normality and there was a full list of projects planned for this year. Already there have been a couple of cruise ships that have visited, with a further six booked in for visits this year along with the *Waverley* (for three visits). The *Balmoral* is in dry dock at the moment and will hopefully be back on the water and fully operational soon but it will depend upon how serious the necessary repairs might be. The *Oldenburg* also has a number of private charters lined up, including a RNLi fund-raising river cruise this Friday evening. There's also a Devon Birds charter this coming Sunday.
- 5.8 AB asked DG if he could supply him with the on-line link for booking *Oldenburg* tickets so AB could put in on the Biosphere's website. DG said he'd be happy to do that. On another matter, AB explained that at the recent training day held for the charter boat skippers, it was pointed out that none of the crew on board the *Oldenburg* had done the Marine Wildlife Accreditation Scheme training and it was thought they ought to. The course is available on-line as well as in-person. AB thought this would send out a 'good signal' to others and DG agreed. DG also wondered if JP and TM-W had done the course yet. JP responded that he had already sent on details of the course to the *Oldenburg's* Information Officer (James).

JB mentioned he had records of a variety of wildlife which he had noted from his boat when out on the water along the north Devon coast, which he would be happy to make available for this course. Examples included sunfish, Manx shearwaters, storm petrels and porpoises. He'd like to know who might appreciate such records and who to send them to. Joe Parker said he'd be happy to receive any such records (warden@lundyisland.org.uk).

6. Conservation Team report Joe Parker (Lundy Warden)

- 6.1 At the last meeting of the Group in October 2023, Joe was present as the acting Warden, following Rosie Ellis's departure to a Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust reserve in West Sussex. He then became the Warden and about a month ago, Tara McEvoy-Wilding joined him as Assistant Warden. Tara has recently left Exeter University with an MSc in marine biology, and she is also a diver.
- 6.2 Seabirds. The comprehensive seabird survey undertaken last summer confirmed that there are now over 40,000 individual seabirds which regard Lundy as their 'home', a consequence of which is that Lundy can now be officially classed as being internationally important for its seabirds (see also 4.5).
- 6.3 Over-winter activities. JP reported there had been quite a lot going on over this past winter. Various members of staff have undergone further training, including 'spraying tickets' (for dealing with rhododendron eradication, bracken and thistle control in particular). There has been a lot of rebuilding work done to drystone walls, where these have been toppled by sheep clambering over them. Following the lambing season, which is just coming to an end, the sheep will be kept within farm fields, so it was important the repairs to the walls were completed before this took place.
- 6.4 Conservation work parties. There are due to be a number of these taking place this year which will include volunteers from the National Trust and from the Lundy Field Society. An LFS one in June will see KH helping people to survey intertidal areas for non-native species, several of which are invasive too.
- 6.5 Biosecurity. JP said there had been no incidents to report since the last meeting in October last year. However, there was a scare at the end of January when it was found that gnawing marks had been found on some food items which had been stored in a ship container on Bideford Quay. It turned out the container had been left open at some point and that rats had found their way into it. Fortunately, after thorough checking, no rat had made it onto the island. JP took the opportunity to remind any charter vessel skippers to make sure, if they intend to land at the jetty, that they are not carrying any rodents with them. He also mentioned that in June there was to be a visit to the island by the RSPB's biosecurity detection dog which has been trained to sniff out rodents. The dog is due to do a tour of all islands off the English coast over the course of the summer.
- 6.6 Bird flu. Fortunately over the past few months there had been no positive cases of bird flu on the island. JP explained he had all the kit he needs to test for the disease on any dead birds which are found. He asked if any dead birds were seen on the water, to please let him know. Upon disembarking, all *Oldenburg* passengers have had to walk over a mat soaked in antiseptic at the top of the jetty, so as to ensure no unwanted material is brought onto the island. There are also discussions underway regarding introducing boot-wash stations at both Bideford and Ilfracombe for passengers to use prior to embarking on the *Oldenburg*. These work against pathogens such as avian flu as well as the transportation of seeds to Lundy.
- 6.7 Surveys. The annual Lundy cabbage survey will be taking place at the end of May/start of June, undertaken by the LFS (Alan and Sandra Rowland); and Buglife

experts will be over at the same time investigating the populations of cabbage flea beetle and weevil which live on the plant.

- 6.8 Upcoming research work. There is due to be an RSPB-led survey of storm petrels, involving tagging individuals to assess their foraging behaviours, providing information on where they go and at what height they are flying.
- 6.9 At the end of JP's report, KH asked if TM-W or JP were familiar with the software installed on JP's computer used to download data from the two sea water temperature loggers: one should be positioned close to the seabed at the end of the jetty and the other should be fixed to the wreck of the *Robert* at about 20 m depth. He then asked if they knew when they might be retrieved. TM-W explained she had been discussing this with JP just yesterday. TM-W would be happy to retrieve the one on the jetty but she will need a dive buddy to accompany her. She was not sure about retrieving the one on the *Robert*. JP added that he intended to check the warden's buoy in the Landing Bay at some point and could help with accessing the temperature logger on the jetty then. DG also added that he would be over for a couple of days next week and could accompany TM-W to retrieve the logger then (Wed. 15th May).

KH explained that the data the loggers have been acquiring were extremely important, especially given the news that the waters around the British Isles are thought to have been considerably warmer this past year. Increasing sea water temperatures could also play a part in the hopeful recovery of the MPA's sea bed communities.

JP asked if there was anywhere in particular KH would like to see the data from the loggers downloaded to? KH suggested it would be best to see what the data show first and then decide if it would be worth publishing a report about the data, perhaps in the LFS Annual Report. KH added that the first recording of sea water temperatures at Lundy was undertaken by the Warden, Nick Dymond, during 1972-73 using a mercury thermometer.

- 6.10 KH thanked JP for mentioning the project KH would be running as part of the next LFS Working Party in looking for the distribution of non-native marine species on the shore. He had prepared a photo-ID sheet for distribution to participants, a few copies of which he had with him at the meeting. The sheet included photos of six (of the 12) species he was expecting to find. These were: harpoon weed *Asparagopsis armata*; pom-pom weed *Caulacanthus okamurae*; wireweed *Sargassum muticum*; red ripple bryozoan *Watersipora subatra*; Australian barnacle *Austrominius modestus*; and Pacific oyster *Magallana gigas*.

JT asked KH if it would be possible for Coastwise members to get involved in his search for non-native species? KH said they'd be most welcome. KH was going over on a Bideford sailing on Saturday 22nd June and returning to Bideford on Tuesday 25th June. His searching would start as soon as he stepped foot on dry land on the Saturday, as this would coincide with the time of low water.

- 6.11 RI asked if either JP or TM-W knew how many dive groups were booked in to stay on the island this summer. JP said there were nine groups he is aware of at present that are booked in and who are requesting cylinder fills. There may also be other groups who plan to stay but haven't as yet requested cylinder fills. Typically groups are booked in to stay over a weekend.
- 6.12 RI explained he had ended up with the five roll-up display stands which had been designed for use in the Church during the Marine Festival. He thought it best that these be displayed again in the Church, if that was possible, and so could bring them over to the island this coming Thursday (9th May) when he'd be attending the Lundy

Management Forum meeting on the island. JP would very much like to have them on the island and reassured RI that they would be kept in a safe place when not in use.

- 6.13 DG mentioned that since the last meeting, all of the interpretation panels in the Beach Building had been replaced and updated, reflecting the new Landmark Trust re-branding design. This had been done thanks to a legacy, with JP and TM-W checking through all of the content prior to production.

7. Natural England update

- 7.1 Sophie Hare had left her post within Natural England and no longer is the contact for Lundy marine matters. RI had contacted Christine Goodall at Natural England (SW) to ask if there was to be a new person to fill the post, but Christine did not know. It would appear Natural England's funding at the moment is limited.

No report was received from Natural England.

8. DSIFCA update (Lauren Parkhouse, DSIFCA)

- 8.1 LP was unable to attend the meeting in person as she was on leave. However, she had kindly sent RI a written report.
- 8.2 An annual review of the Monitoring and Control Plan for the access area for trawl gear on the coarse sediment of the Lundy SAC had been undertaken. IVMS data for 2023 were obtained via Themis for activity in the area open to demersal trawl gear within the Lundy SAC. A data search for activity at speeds of 2-4 knots between 1st January and 31st December 2023 was conducted for four vessels with D&S IFCA mobile fishing permits which fish in the north of the District.

It was found that during this time, just one of the vessels fished within the access area. This vessel entered the site for one tow on 12th June 2023 for 21 minutes. As this activity was at a lower level than the baseline set in 2019 a review of the habitat regulation assessment was not needed on this occasion.

- 8.3 Officers are now working on habitat regulation assessments (HRAs) for the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC which has as its sole named feature the harbour porpoise. The SAC includes the waters around Lundy. We are currently in the early stages of reviewing literature. We have carried out fishing activity surveys with the fishermen at the ports of Clovelly, Appledore/Bideford and Ilfracombe for potting and netting activity. IVMS data are being analysed for towed gear activity. As well as the direct impact of bycatch, we will also be assessing the fishing impacts on the prey species of the porpoise, habitat impacts and noise/disturbance. We aim to have assessments complete by the end of the summer. The assessments will determine if any management measures will be necessary or not.
- 8.4 The meetings in north Devon were also used to speak to the fishermen about concerns around potting and netting in the north of the District. This had a focus on crab and lobster to feed into evidence gathering for potential next steps of the Fisheries Management Plan, but we also covered other concerns around whelk fishing and fishing in general. The fishing activity data we gathered at the meetings will also be used to inform us better of areas used by the fishing industry when we are responding to marine licence consultations. We are now doing the same in the south of the District.
- 8.5 KH thanked LP in her absence for her report and asked if there were any comments or matters arising on IFCA activities. JB asked if LP had given any information about tagging surveys within the MPA's No Take Zone. RI said she hadn't included any

mention of tagging surveys in her report. JB explained this would be the only way of finding out what is moving in and out of the NTZ. RI explained that some tagging of individual lobsters had taken place in May and June of 2022 during the co-study of the NTZ undertaken by Plymouth University (c/o Dr Emma Sheehan) and funded by the Biosphere Reserve. This had involved using araldite glue to attach a printed paper tag to the carapace. JB added that the tagging study he had helped Sarah Clark (of the IFCA) with a few years back involved inserting plastic tags in the soft flesh at the end of the head carapace where it met the first section of the tail. RI offered to follow-up on the Plymouth Uni study to find out about the number of returns from tagged lobsters and from where they had been caught.

JB added that he had picked up lobsters which had been tagged at Lundy off Hartland Point; and on another occasion, he'd caught one which had been tagged off the south Wales coast. So they certainly do get around. He went on to say that he was disappointed not to have been informed of the results of the IFCA tagging study he was involved in.

[Note that since the meeting, RI had been in contact with Sarah Clark at D&S IFCA who had kindly sent him the summary of the data she collected in 2008/09. This is being circulated to all with these minutes.]

9. Historic England update (Terry Newman)

- 9.1 Licensing for the Protected Wreck sites. TN wanted to thank JP on the island for sorting out names which now appear under the Lundy Company overall licence. The number of licencees this year (2024) is a little down on last year (2023), but that may change as the season progresses.

The Lundy Company has renewed their licences for the Gull Rock site and the *Iona II* (note that this licence covers a number of charter boats as well); so too has the Ilfracombe Dive Club; and Mike Deaton (for the Appledore Club); and Fiona Hamilton-Matthews for just the *Iona II*.

- 9.2 Forensic marking of *in situ* wreck artefacts. The trial of this new methodology of invisible marking of artefacts under water has now successfully concluded. Its launch was announced last autumn with a great fanfare and there have since been two training sessions led by MSDS (the company which developed the product). A number of law enforcement officers attended the training sessions, including some from Devon and Cornwall Police's Marine Support Unit, as well as Jules Fry (the Heritage Crime Officer for this area). Over the weekend of 20/21 April, a demonstration was given to the SW Maritime Archaeology Group by MSDS on a wreck site, also attended by members of the Marine Support Unit which was most encouraging.
- 9.3 The Common Enforcement Manual is a new manual due to be published by Historic England in late summer/early autumn. It is designed to act as a 'one-stop shop' for people on the water involved with law enforcement.
- 9.4 On 24/25 April in Chester, the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA) held their annual conference. TN was pleased to report that heritage crime featured prominently on the morning of the second day. There is now a special interest group for heritage crime and if anyone is interested in this group, go to the CIFA website for further details.
- 9.5 RI asked if TN or JP knew if there were to be any Protected Wreck Days being planned for this summer at Lundy, in association with the Nautical Archaeological Society. TN thought there were some planned although JP indicated he was not aware of any, as he was not informed in advance of planned dives on the Protected

Wrecks but only after they'd taken place on the lists supplied by the charter boat skippers. He said he'd like to improve on this situation, so asked for TN to let him know if and when any were being planned.

TN then checked the NAS website to see what was being planned. He found there was a 'Lundy wreck diving expedition' listed from Thursday, 4th July until Sunday 7th. JP added that in order to get a better 'handle' on what groups were visiting the MPA, he had produced a new booking form for tank-fills down at the Beach Building which asks where visiting dive groups are intending to dive. However, there remained groups who did not step foot on the island at all, and it was almost impossible to glean any information from these groups as to where they had dived.

- 9.5 Following on from this, RI asked if it might be possible to obtain more information about where divers were diving within the MPA. In the original Management Plan published in 1983, there was a map indicating which were the most popular dive sites, including both wrecks and sites of marine life interest. He wondered if a similar assessment could be produced again. JP confirmed he would be very keen to see this being done and it could be something that Tara could take on as she begins to build relationships with the various visiting dive groups. DG added that this would require the help of the charter boat skippers as well as the logbooks of the local dive clubs. RI added that this could be done by means of an email at the end of each season asking to let the Warden know 'where have you dived this year?'. JP added he had meetings with TN three times a year, so it wouldn't have to wait until the end of each year for this to be done for the protected wrecks. KH suggested that any such map showing popular locations is likely to have a very large circle at Gannets' Bay where people are snorkelling with the seals!

10. Any Other Business

- 10.1 News from the Biosphere Reserve. AB brought the meeting up to date with various happenings. RI suggested this ought to be a standing item on the Agenda in future, which AB agreed with.

Chloe Nunn was appointed in January as the Biosphere's Marine Projects Officer. Her post was originally funded through the Environment Agency's 3Cs (Championing Coastal Co-ordination) programme, with her contract now extending to a full year.

The Biosphere has recently submitted an Expression of Interest to the Seascapes Recovery Fund, with grants available up to £1m. The proposed project would include several partners (several represented within this Group) and it would span five years. Amongst other things, the project would be looking at monitoring studies, community engagement and possible new No Take Zones (in association with the D&S IFCA). A response to proceed with a full application is expected within the next couple of months, with projects starting in 2025.

The Biosphere has been engaging with offshore wind proposals, especially with regard to onshore cable routes in seeking more rationalised routes for the cable corridors. Next month, two consultation events are planned, following on from a first consultation event (which did not go particularly well). The Biosphere's Marine Nature Recovery Plan (which includes the waters around Lundy) provides information for any possible Marine Net Gain opportunities, but because the Plan is not a legally recognised document, the developers are not obliged to give it their full attention.

AB has also been talking with different partners about various means of digital monitoring. This might be in the form of acoustic or visual 'grabs' of data. He has been in contact with a number of 'tech' suppliers, one of which is Seiche (based in N. Devon) who produce equipment suitable for cetacean monitoring studies, now using

AI to distinguish various in-water signals. AB is seeing how this might build into a cetacean monitoring project throughout the Biosphere sea area. In addition, he has been in touch with another company which has a fairly small underwater LIDAR unit which they are keen to showcase. The unit is on board a submersible so would be suitable for mapping underwater features, such as shipwrecks or rock pinnacles. A hand-held surface scanner might also be available, perhaps for surveying intertidal caves. TN pointed out that a 3-D image was produced of the *Iona II* by Tim Clements during the Marine Festival using photogrammetry, which RI added he'd like to see up on the new MPA website once that's sorted out.

Finally, the Biosphere is due for its 10-year review which is reported back to UNESCO, which provides an opportunity to take a step back and to look at the Reserve and its configuration. The idea is that there'll be different core zones (originally, Braunton Burrows was the sole core area), including ones centred on Dartmoor, culm grassland, the Taw-Torridge estuary and further out into the marine environment, reflecting the whole range of ecotypes the Biosphere displays.

10.2 Marine life observations. KH pleaded that everyone records their observations of the marine life they are seeing this summer and shares them with him. He has just completed the Lundy Field Society's Annual Report's marine species list for last year, and the number of records he could find (either from logbooks on the island, on the *Oldenburg*, or via social media) were vary sparse. He directed a question at TM-W asking if she was encouraging those staying on the island to use the marine life logbook in the Tavern. TM-W responded by saying that the majority of those using the MPA did not venture onto the island, and this was proving a problem with regard to finding out what had or had not been seen. She thought it might be best to provide some form of instruction sheet to have on board the charter boats (and fishing boats) which sets out how to report interesting sightings. KH added that Lundy seems to be a bit of a 'hot spot' for gelatinous plankton, so making records of these would be welcome in the logbooks.

10.3 Condition of marine life within the MPA. JB asked if KH could clarify what he meant earlier by 'a decline in the seabed habitat'. KH explained he meant the quality of the seabed and specifically, its associated communities. He was thinking particularly of species which are listed as being nationally rare or scarce, or are just colourful and charismatic and appeal to divers. Whilst he has photographs which help to show the apparent decline in these species, it is not showing up in the monitoring which Natural England undertake. JB wondered over what timescale KH was referring to. KH explained it was since the mid-1980s, so over the past 40 years. An example he gave was of pink sea fans which were once abundant in places, often quite large and in a healthy state; today there are few to be seen and those present are mostly small and in a poor state. It is not clear what has caused this decline. In the early 2000s they suffered from an infection which they appeared to recover from, yet they are still in a poor condition. They also suffer from fouling organisms settling on them, as well as acting as attachment points for the egg cases of small sharks. KH also pointed out that individual sea fans are either male or female and it may be that mature individuals are now too far apart to be able to produce offspring. The pink sea fans at Skomer MCZ seem to be suffering in a similar way.

JB wondered if the amount of sediment in the Bristol Channel has increased over the years, perhaps linked with gravel extraction which had been going on for decades. KH agreed this might be a problem. The Environment Agency did monitor turbidity levels but samples were usually taken close to the shore [of the mainland]. Another way of measuring turbidity over the long term is by noting the maximum depth of certain species of seaweed, KH continued. This has been done at Lundy on an infrequent basis since the mid-1980s but results hadn't shown any definite trends. JB wondered if increasing water temperature was influencing the growth of various

marine organisms. KH said it might be. What is predicted is that cold-water species are likely to retreat northwards and for warm-water species to take their place. He gave the example of plumose anemones, which were once abundant in inshore areas of the whole of SW England, now becoming quite rare. Pink sea fans are a southern species which are doing very well off the southern coast of SW England, yet for some reason they're not doing so well at Lundy. KH added that since 1900, the average sea surface temperature in the Western Approaches had only risen by about 0.5°C.

KH believes that Natural England should be investigating why this apparent downturn in overall condition of seabed communities at Lundy has been happening and what might be done about it. He has raised this issue on several occasions but it appears to fall on deaf ears.

DG made the point that quite a lot of environmental data were gathered during the EIA studies linked with the proposed Atlantic Array windfarm in the outer Bristol Channel, which were undertaken between 2010 and 2012. This included assessing the suspended sediment load, which DG seemed to remember being 600,000 tonnes. Also, this load didn't seem to change much over a two year period.

One further point that AB wanted to make, linked with historical records, was that in mediaeval times, native oysters would have been a staple of the diet of many people in settlements bordering the Bristol Channel. He suggested this might indicate that sea water quality could well have been better then due to the natural filtration effect of the oysters.

- 10.4 Feedback on the NTZ film screening in Plymouth on 26th April. RI reported that the 30 min. film which was made during the Marine Festival about the effectiveness of the Lundy No Take Zone (entitled *Safeguarding Our Seas: Lessons From Lundy*) was shown on 26th April at the end of a one-day conference run by South-West Marine Ecosystems. The film was sponsored by the Blue Marine Foundation and was filmed by Gareth Alvarez and Rob Whitney of North Devon Moving Image. We were very pleased that both John Balls and Ben Bengey, representing the N. Devon fishing community, came down to Plymouth and were happy to speak at the end of the film about how the NTZ at Lundy has worked. DG commented that he had been very impressed by the film and that it had had a very positive reaction from all those who had seen it.

The film is now up on Youtube and is available for anyone to watch.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ecsil2ChwA8&t=556s>

Following the screening, RI had been approached by Cornwall Wildlife Trust's Fisheries Liaison Officer, Oscar Miller, asking RI to contribute towards the efforts being made by CWT to establish a No Take Zone within St Austell Bay, where both mearl beds and seagrass beds were present.

- 10.5 Plans for a new MPA website. On the back of the Marine Festival, RI had been seeking support for an independent Lundy MPA website to be set up, as he felt there was so much more to say about the MPA than is present on the existing pages of the Landmark Trust/Lundy site. A plan of the site's content/layout had been drawn up and had been approved by DG and JP amongst others. Whilst there could be a lot of information put up on the new site (including photos, videos etc.), RI explained that the diving information (particularly for those staying on, and diving from, the island) would largely remain on the existing Lundy site. He was currently trying to source some funding which would allow the site to be built and appealed to anyone present who may know of a possible source of co-funding to get in touch with him.
- 10.6 Plans to update the MPA's Marine Management Plan. At present there is no set period for each update of the MMP to last for. The last one was done in 2017 and RI

thinks it is now due for an update. In fact, he suggests it is done every 5 years in future. He has approached Natural England with this suggestion and whilst they approve of the concept, they do not have funds available at present to put towards the cost of an update. AB has indicated that the Biosphere may be able to help out next year with some funding, which will be much appreciated. DG and JP have also indicated that some of TM-W's time could be put towards undertaking some of the updating. It's probably going to have to wait until this coming winter before this might be done.

KH wondered if the process of updating was going to include seeing whether the objectives in the current Plan are being achieved. RI thought this was a good point: that the objectives associated with each featured species or habitat within the Plan ought to be assessed in some way, with an indication of what practical actions have (or have not) been carried out in meeting the objectives.

DG added that this might be something for the Management Forum to consider at their meeting on Thursday of this week, when a Natural England staff member (with terrestrial expertise) would be present. This is because Natural England have a statutory duty to report on the condition of the SAC (which covers exactly the same area as the MPA). RI pointed out that they supposedly evaluated the sublittoral reef feature in September 2022 (after one day's diving, with the other 4 days of planned diving called off due to poor weather) and determined it was "in favourable condition", an assessment which, as has been heard earlier this evening, is strongly disputed by both KH and RI. DG's point was that in order to update the Management Plan, it would be sensible to make use of the findings of the SAC monitoring undertaken by Natural England. He thought it important to find out what intentions Natural England have for updating the Management Plan and for their continuing monitoring of the SAC/MPA.

- 10.7 Future funding of the MPA. KH pointed out that a General Election was likely to happen in the next six months which means that overall government policy and associated targets may well change. Natural England lies within the Defra family and are given instructions (and resources) from Defra officials. DG added that the problem was not a new one, reminding the Group that Natural England used to fund the MPA quite generously (to the tune of about £80k), but with the addition of so many more MCZs on its books, it was no longer able to do this. There is now no Natural England funding which comes to the island for the SAC/MCZ, yet the island's Conservation Team are continuing intertidal monitoring projects which Natural England could then use in undertaking their statutory assessment of the condition of the intertidal reef feature.

RI pointed out that many MPAs overseas raise money by charging divers who dive within an MPA a set visitors' fee and wondered whether the same approach should be adopted at Lundy. SG added that local dive clubs may have something to say about that! DG added that a starting point, as mentioned earlier in the meeting (see 9.5), might be to see how many divers were diving within the MPA. He also said that the new MPA website would enhance the independent standing of the MPA from the running of the island in general, in the same way that the Bird Observatory website had done for the Bird Observatory.

- 10.8 Finally, those who had joined on-line for the meeting were asked how they had found the experience. MD pointed out that on the whole it was ok, although the connection during TN's presentation was intermittent which meant he lost out on what was being said then. He did say though it would be of benefit to many who would usually have to come from a distance away to attend, in terms of cutting down on travel time and also on unnecessary journeys. From the island, JP agreed with what MD had said. He added that he'd like to attend virtually for the spring meeting and then be present in person for the autumn meeting. JT explained she'd only just got back from holiday,

so being able to be at home for the meeting suited her very well. MD also added that representatives from the statutory agencies may also appreciate not having to travel to attend the meetings in future. DG explained that Thursday's meeting of the Management Forum (to be held on Lundy) would be the first to be 'hybrid', only possible because of the recent improvement in the island's internet connection thanks to a connection to the Starlink satellite array (as a free trial offered by the government). JB agreed that having the option of either attending on-line or in person was appreciated. He added that the layout of the furniture in the room might be improved to make sure that all speakers in the room could be seen by the camera.

KH wanted to add a thank you to both DG and to Lyndsey Green for helping to set up this evening's meeting via Teams, and to the Ilfracombe Dive Club for providing the meeting room and the large TV. He also added that if anyone wanted a presentation on Lundy's declining marine life, they should contact him!

Date of the next meeting: proposed as being on the evening of **Tuesday 22nd October 2024**, with the meeting to be held in Bideford. It is hoped this will also follow a hybrid format of being in person and on line.