

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



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Minutes of the 21st 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 78th meeting)

held on Thursday 8th May 2025 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>
Keith Hiscock	KH	Marine Biological Association
Robert Irving	RI	Lundy Field Society
Lauren Parkhouse	LP	Devon and Severn IFCA (Environment Officer)
Derek Green	DG	Lundy General Manager
Joe Parker	JP	Warden, Lundy Conservation Team
Hannah Nash	HN	N. Devon Biosphere Reserve (Marine Project Co-ordinator)
Maggs Ashton	MA	Ilfracombe Sub-Aqua Club (Diving Officer)

On-line:

Tara McEvoy-Wilding	TMW	Assistant Warden, Lundy Conservation Team
Jules Webber	JW	Natural England (SW Marine Team)
Andy Bell	AB	N. Devon Biosphere Reserve (Co-ordinator)
Terry Newman	TN	Historic England (Maritime Archaeologist)

1. Welcome (KH)

KH welcomed all to the 21st meeting of the Lundy MPA Advisory Group, both to those in the room and also those joining on-line via MS Teams. The meeting is an opportunity for those present to be brought up to date with matters concerning the MPA, to make mention of any wildlife observations and to raise any concerns about activities happening around Lundy.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from: Mike Deaton (Appledore Sub-Aqua Club), Chris & Sharron Blackmore (Sea Watch Foundation), Rick Morris (MARINELife), Judith Tatem (N Devon Coastwise), Carli Cocciardi (Devon Wildlife Trust) & John Balls (North Devon Fishermen's Association).

3. Minutes of the last meeting (held at the Ilfracombe & N. Devon SAC Clubhouse, Ilfracombe) on 22nd October 2024.

A copy of the minutes had been emailed out to members a few weeks after the last meeting and again when the agenda for this evening's meeting was sent out. A limited number of printed copies were made available to those present in the room. KH asked if anyone had any corrections and as nobody had, these were accepted. RI was thanked by KH for producing these.

4. Matters arising

- 4.1 For matters not due to be covered under the agenda, KH requested all to make sure they passed on any sightings of interest to him (or to enter them into the Logbook in the Tavern) so he can include them in the reports he submits each year to the Lundy Field Society Annual Report. He mentioned that "things are changing quite a lot in SW seas at the moment" so any such sightings could well have hidden significance. He also explained that he had written up his survey of the island's intertidal non-native species from last year and this would appear in the Society's Annual Report for 2024 due out in the next few weeks.

5. Island happenings during the past six months (Derek Green)

- 5.1 Once again, a busy winter period for DG. The *Oldenburg* entered dry dock at Sharpness in November as normal. It was expected that work replacing the afterdeck would be completed (the final work of a 3-year project), though the inspectors passed the existing underfloor steel sheeting as ok and so didn't need replacing. However, attention was needed to the steel on the upper deck (four small parts replaced) and the foredeck (the whole deck replaced). So these repairs delayed the ship getting back into service until early March. Fortunately, the Severn Seas Shipping Company's ship *Mair* was able to do the supply run to the island over the winter and this contract was extended to provide cover for the absence of the *Oldenburg*.
- 5.2 There has been an update to the *Oldenburg*'s life expectancy by a team of surveyors, indicating how much longer the ship can safely remain in service. There should be 10-15 years more life in her yet and even though this would cost money, it wasn't as much as it would cost to replace her with a brand new ship, which Harland & Wolf at Appledore have costed at between £18m and £20m.
- 5.3 Some repairs are due to take place to some damaged fenders along one side of the jetty which Severn Seas will be undertaking.
- 5.4 The RIB, which has been fully refurbished, is due to be evaluated for its coding tomorrow. Assuming this is granted*, then it will go over to the island and be ready for use. A funding bid has been made to the Lundy Field Society to cover the cost of essential pieces of equipment for 'kitting out' the boat. Both Joe (Warden) and Tara (Assistant Warden) now have their RYA Powerboat Level 2 certificates, so are looking forward to coxing the boat. KH asked if the intention was to be able to have paying passengers on board. DG explained it is envisaged those doing conservation tasks will be able to be taken out in the boat, but it wouldn't be used for round-the-island trips for visitors. Any income from survey trips will help to pay for the boat's

maintenance in future. RI asked for the boat's arrival and launch at Lundy be photographed so he could include these in the news section of the new MPA website.

**Unfortunately, the day after the meeting, DG was informed by the inspector that the RIB would have to be assessed for its 'brown coding' in Plymouth and that it would take several weeks to complete.*

- 5.5 The Renewable Energy project. During the January shut-down, the island's PLC (the logic control system for all of the heating across the island) was replaced with a new, state-of-the-art digital PLC plus back-up. This means the system is much more stable and it can be monitored and controlled remotely (from a mobile phone!). It will also be able to incorporate the new renewable systems (wind turbine and solar panels) when these come on-stream.

DG explained that he had been in contact with Torridge District Council with regard to a preliminary assessment to see if the planned works (of installing a wind turbine, solar panels and battery storage) would require an additional environmental impact assessment prior to proceeding. Their response was that, due to all of the surveys which were carried out last year, they do not require an additional environmental impact assessment to be undertaken. This is good news as it will save time, effort and some money.

The plan is for wind and solar to generate enough needs for the island and no more. The cost of 160,000 litres of diesel/yr will be saved, with the intention of having the island's energy being about 85% produced from renewable sources. Some diesel will still be required for the three generators and the back-up generator to be available when needed (i.e. when the wind doesn't blow and the sun doesn't shine!).

The progress of the project, together with initial responses back from the statutory agencies to the planned works, can now be seen live on Torridge DC's planning portal. On the Lundy website, there is now a new page all about the Renewables Project [see: <https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/lundyisland/discovering-lundy/renewable-energy-project/>]. The planned start of construction for the project is May 2026 with the intended completion date being September 2026.

- 5.6 The water treatment plant has been upgraded over the winter, renewing all of the control system. The water quality has also just been tested by a team from Torridge DC and it's passed with flying colours. The extra capacity the system now has is being appreciated given the recent dry spring.
- 5.7 DG explained that in order to cut down on energy loss, over the winter a new energy-efficient heater has been installed in Little St John's; Stonecroft is due to get an air-source heat pump; and many of the windows in the letting properties have been replaced with double-glazed units.
- 5.8 Staff changes. A new engineer was appointed at the end of last season but sadly that didn't work out and his replacement, Tristan, has recently started with his wife Annette. Matt Scantlebury, the island's cargo co-ordinator, has been promoted to island Foreman/Deputy Manager, meaning he will be in charge should Rob Waterfield or DG be away.
- 5.9 DG informed the Group that the occupancy of the island remains strong. Last year (2024) there was an occupancy level of 88.2% for the year, meaning that for every available night for all 24 letting properties, they were booked for 88.2% of the total time. For 2025 so far, the occupancy rate is at 82%.
- 5.10 Sadly, DG reported it had been a slow start to the current season due to the surprising frequency of easterly winds during April leading to a number of *Oldenburg* sailings being cancelled.

6. Conservation Team report Joe Parker (Lundy Warden)

- 6.1 Grey seals. JP reported that the Conservation Team had had a busy winter. By the end of the seal pupping season (roughly the end of November), a record 71 seal pups had been born. However, Storm Lillian (22nd & 23rd August 2024) and strong easterlies during September meant that the mortality rate was up to 35%. This was in marked contrast to the 8% rate noted the year before.

KH wanted to add that he'd recently heard that at Skomer the number of grey seal pups had doubled since 1990. He wondered if Lundy's numbers showed a similar trend. JP explained it's tricky to tell as the effort in recording pup numbers has been greater in recent years and the recording methodology has also changed, but it appeared as though more pups were being recorded. KH added that the survival rate for pups at Skomer was between 70% and 90%, though on occasion as low as 60%. JP explained that for 2023, the rate was similarly high but for 2024 it was much lower. KH added that the number of adults at Skomer appeared to have increased threefold since 1990.

[Since the meeting, RI has checked on historical records of seal numbers at Lundy. In 1969, 80 adult seals were counted on 6Jul69; in 2024, 182 adults were counted on 3Sep24, down on the record number of 196 adults counted on 15Aug23. The new MPA website (www.lundympa.org.uk) now includes records of grey seal numbers, taken from accounts published by the Lundy Field Society on-line (see <https://www.lundy.org.uk/resources/annual-report-archive>)].

- 6.2 Seabirds. 2024 proved to be a 'middle-ing' season for the island's seabirds. Kittiwakes, a red listed species, have been struggling, with their chicks getting to about three weeks old (21 days) and then dying in the nest. They would be expected to fledge at 35 days old. Last August had unusually cold and damp weather which may have had an impact. The availability of food seemed adequate to support the auks, but surface-feeding birds (such as kittiwakes and fulmars) have struggled.
- 6.3 A new MPA Code of Conduct for Waters Users and those coming ashore. JP has produced an adapted version of the MPA's Code of Conduct for distribution amongst charter boats, other water users and for those intending to land on the island. He distributed some laminated copies of this to those present and has sent out digital versions to those not present*. This version covers the no-fly zone for drones across the whole MPA and over the island too; and biosecurity issues (associated with keeping the island rat-free) including ensuring all perishables are taken away after a visit.

*https://www.lundympa.org.uk/images/downloads/Water_users_and_coming_ashore_Code_of_Conduct_2025.pdf

Note that this Code is additional to the Seal Code of Conduct which has been produced by the Sea Alliance – a grouping of seal groups from throughout the NE Atlantic (<https://www.sealalliance.org/members>). JP handed out some copies of this Code for charter boats to have available to members of the public.

RI was a little confused as there now seemed to be several codes which overlapped and asked if there is one overarching Code for the MPA. JP explained his intention was that the new Code for Water Users and those coming ashore should now be viewed as the one overarching Code.

- 6.4 Temperature loggers. Two temperature loggers were recovered from their seabed locations back in 2021(?) and "put in a safe place". Since then they have remained 'lost' (due to changes in Conservation staff), though JP explained they came to light a few weeks ago, hiding behind his desk! When deployed, one had been positioned at the end of the jetty (below LWM spring tides) and the other on the wreck of the MV *Robert* (at about 20m depth). These units were not in a condition to re-deploy,

so a bid to acquire replacement units has been put to the Lundy Field Society. If successful, it is hoped the loggers will be deployed later this season. (JP has also put in a request to the LFS for some camera recording equipment).

KH explained that a graph of temperature data points covering two years had been produced from the logger which had been recovered from the MV *Robert*. By comparing these sea water temperature data with those obtained from the Landing Bay in 1973, it appears that the apparent trend is that the winters are getting milder rather than the summers getting hotter. This will affect which warm water species we might expect to see appearing at Lundy. KH emphasised the importance of maintaining these loggers and using the data they produce for comparisons with sea water temperature data being acquired from Skomer as well as at another monitoring site between Plymouth and the Eddystone Lighthouse.

- 6.5 Charter boat Accreditation Scheme. JP had had a meeting with HN recently to discuss the Scheme. He explained Lundy's Conservation team are keen to increase the communication between the Biosphere and the island, with the Team eager to be part of presenting the Scheme's training sessions as well, probably via an on-line link-up. AB supported this proposal. [See also further discussion on this topic under 10.4]
- 6.6 Volunteering. There's a volunteer over on the island at the moment, Kirsty, who'll be doing some seal disturbance monitoring along with supporting Tara with some of her marine surveys. Water users appear to be respecting the request to keep away from hauled-out seals in areas such as Gannets' Bay and Brazen Ward. Kirsty's presence is in addition to the other volunteer roles already in place.
- 6.7 A proposed voluntary No Anchoring Zone. Following the discussions that took place during the last Advisory group meeting last October, the No Anchoring Zone idea has been dropped in favour of installing more eco-moorings at sites along the east coast. The next steps will involve sorting out how many, their cost and the necessary permissions for their installation.
- 6.8 Terrestrial conservation matters. Three Dexter heifers (a small breed of cattle) have recently arrived on the island. This is one result of a slight change of direction in the land management of the island linked to a new Stewardship Scheme, trying to enhance the characteristic vegetation types on the top of the island. The number of domestic sheep are being reduced, as well as the numbers of feral sika deer, Soay sheep and goat. This was following a recent check on their numbers using a drone fitted with a thermal camera, which found there to be 181 sika deer, 285 Soay sheep and 28 goats – all higher than expected. The densities of these species for such a small island is not helping the natural vegetation, so over the next couple of years the ambition is to change the grazing regime by culling each of these species quite considerably. By contrast, the number of cattle will increase, of both Highland and Dexters, as well as the Lundy pony population. JP explained they are also experimenting with using 'no-fence collars' on the cattle, which would allow for grazing to be targeted through GPS trackers in the collars, hopefully leading to more trampling of bracken whilst protecting heathland and archaeological sites.
- JP was asked by AB what he thought the ideal size of the sika deer population should be. JP thought about 25 individuals. The intention is to exclude them from where the rhododendrons used to grow on the east sidelands, thereby allowing native plants to recolonise these areas. DG added that it will take at least a couple of years to reduce the population size to this target number. The intention is that carcasses will be used to produce venison for the Tavern, but the existing facility to do this (the Game Larder) needs to be enlarged. AB said that explaining these culls to the island's visitors would be important and JP agreed. He had invited in the feral stock team to join him in his talks to the staying visitors in order to explain what they

are doing when they're on the island. Information sheets had also been left in properties, explaining what was going on. This approach had been welcomed.

AB also mentioned that the Biosphere now has a thermal drone and that he would be happy for it to be used for such surveys on Lundy. JP agreed to talk with AB further about this possibility.

- 6.9 HN asked a question regarding the Code of Conduct. She was aware of more boats visiting the island, with craft coming over from south Wales, from north Cornwall as well as more trips being made by local boats (Celtic Seas in particular). She wondered if JP had noticed if these 'new' visitors were aware of the Code of Conduct. JP confirmed there was difficulty in speaking with those on board boats which remain offshore. HN said it would be important to get the information out to these boats. It was hoped this would be where the new RIB would be useful.
- DG added that he would also expect some of the support vessels linked with the new windfarm developments to be calling in to the island in the coming years particularly during periods of rough weather. It would be important for these vessels to be aware of regulations relating to the MPA.
- 6.10 KH asked if the new RIB would have the words 'Lundy Warden' or similar written on it. DG said not yet but that it would be a simple task to do. KH thought it would make the RIB look official and JP agreed.
- 6.11 TMW wanted to point out how important social media was in having an influence on the behaviour of snorkellers and divers with seals. There had been a recent increase in videos being posted of interactions with seals at Lundy and it was proving hard to work out how best to ensure that those doing the 'posting' appreciated that the Code of Conduct related to their behaviour as well. TMW added that a big wetsuit brand had recently been showing an advert of their wetsuits with a person's gloved hand being bitten by a seal, and this definitely didn't help the message that was trying to be put across at Lundy.

JP pointed out that some of the main social media outlets were open to banning certain videos which showed inappropriate behaviour, so suggested that could be an approach which could be used. DG said this whole situation was a minefield and would be tricky to sort out. He wondered if it would be appropriate to send out a 'reminder' from the Lundy Conservation Team to the various charter businesses to say please take note of our Code of Conduct. HN agreed that it could be something that the Biosphere could assist with as well. Another idea which DG suggested was to make sure the new eco-mooring buoys had a QR code visible adjacent to the buoy's tie-ring which would make mention of the Code of Conduct, stressing the expected behaviour of individuals when in the water with seals. TMW agreed this would be good. In addition, she was thinking of producing a poster which could be sent out to charter boat businesses to display on their boats. HN said she'd be happy to help with this.

7. Natural England update

Jules Webber (SW Marine Team)

- 7.1 KH welcomed JW to the meeting (via Teams). JW wanted to start with an apology concerning Natural England's absence from these meetings for the past couple of years since Sophie Hare left the organisation at the end of 2022 (and Beth Williams also now moving on). Unfortunately, Natural England has not been in a position to fill the posts they vacated. Natural England is currently undergoing a business planning reassessment which will provide an indication of priorities for the next financial year (2026-27). Resourcing these meetings more effectively from now on will also be looked at. JW explained it probably wouldn't be herself coming along to future

meetings. [Since the meeting, in early September, NE confirmed that Megan (Meg) Hayward-Smith will be NE's new marine site lead for the Lundy MPA - R].

- 7.2 JW explained there was not a great deal to update the meeting about. Natural England now has a new Strategic Direction (2025-2030) which was published in April. There are six priorities within that, under the overall heading of 'what does nature need right now?'. The emphasis is on recovering nature (and not just its protection); how that recovery is funded; and a consideration of what government wants right now, ensuring that their growth agenda does not adversely impact on nature.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67e69a8737baea91c58c9ff3/natural-england-strategic-direction.pdf>

A Strategy is currently being worked on now which develops these main themes which will be published later in the year.

- 7.3 Natural England have just published the condition assessment of the rock features of the Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ. JW pointed out that the condition assessment of the sediment features were published about 18 months ago. The rock features have now been evaluated as being in 'favourable' condition although the confidence level for that assessment has been rated as 'medium', as the data used for the assessment are over six years old. The spiny lobster and the pink sea fan, identified as 'featured species' have yet to be evaluated.
- 7.4 KH asked JW, following the curtailed visit of Natural England's dive team in September 2022, if she knew when the team's next likely visit to Lundy would be. JW explained there was nothing scheduled for this financial year. For an unscheduled visit there would need to be a priority reason, which could be triggered by any number of things, for the dive team to re-visit. There was nothing planned for the near future. If one of the named features was believed to have been impacted in an adverse way, then Natural England would put forward a funding case in the business planning round which would then go through a robust prioritisation programme along with other cases. KH understood the difficulty of 'stretched' funding and asked who he should write to in order to express his concerns. JW suggested writing to the local area team (marine south-west).

8. DSIFCA update Lauren Parkhouse (DSIFCA)

- 8.1 LP informed the Group that the IFCA currently have a public consultation open at the moment (until 23rd May) for proposed amendments to the potting permit condition. This will "prohibit potting vessels operating within the District with one or more 'vivaria tanks' below the uppermost deck exceeding a volume of 2 cubic metres". Essentially, the larger the tanks, the more catch can be kept alive for longer, meaning that the vessel can remain at sea for longer. This can put additional pressure on stocks. The new regulation is designed to dissuade bigger potting vessels coming into the District from other areas (such as Cornwall), which are also in the process (or have done so already) of introducing similar byelaws. Some of the bigger boats which operate around Lundy come up from Cornwall, so the proposed byelaw change should restrict the catches these boats are able to make around Lundy.
- 8.2 As part of her duties, LP undertakes an annual monitoring control plan for trawls within the 'open area' of the Lundy MPA. During 2024 there was no trawling activity in the area in question, so that will carry on 'as is' for this current year.
- 8.3 LP mentioned that D&S IFCA officers were still working on the Bristol Channel Approaches SAC, which has as its sole feature the harbour porpoise. Staff are working closely with both the MMO and with Cornwall IFCA on this, with regular monthly meetings. It is a complicated site which has already taken 18 months to try to sort out various issues, with discussions likely to continue for a bit longer yet.

- 8.4 LP also announced that the IFCA website now has an on-line reporting form for people to report any suspicious activities, which can be done anonymously if desired. DG thought that would be helpful in reporting any incidents relating to the No Take Zone and LP was able to confirm the site could also accept uploaded photos.
- 8.5 RI ask LP about the continuing permitting of trawling within the NE corner of the MPA. He understood that there had been no trawling undertaken over the past two years and that there had only been trawling undertaken on two occasions during the year before that (2022) – which LP confirmed – or in other words a minimal level of trawling. RI wondered what it would require for there to be no trawling allowed within the MPA. LP said straightaway that she would have to deflect an answer to that to the IFCA's Chief Officer, Mat Mander. However, LP did explain that if no impact was apparent on the seabed feature (predominantly sand in that area) from the trawling, then it was likely it would be allowed to continue. She continued that the IFCA has a duty to balance the need for conservation as well as for a sustainable fishery. When the impact assessment for this part of the MPA was originally undertaken (prior to the introduction of the mobile gear permitting byelaw) the level of trawling activity was higher than it is now and it was felt this was at an acceptable level to not damage the seabed. The monitoring which is undertaken assesses the level of monitoring undertaken and it that should increase to a level above the initially agreed level, then the IFCA would decide if additional management measures were needed.

RI then asked if LP was aware if the area in question was composed of pure sand or whether there were larger pieces of gravel mixed in with the sand. LP confirmed that grab samples had confirmed the seabed to be classified as being coarse sediment. LP also confirmed that the trawling in question was targeting squid rather than demersal species of fish. Squid migrate to the area for a couple of months in late summer (July/August), remaining close to the seabed, but they have not appeared for the past ten years in any quantity. This is the reason why the number of trawling occurrences has been so low.

The main reason why RI was asking about this was that he wondered if there was so little trawling taking place within the MPA, he could see that from a conservation point of view it would be a relatively small step to then agree the whole MPA becoming a no-trawling area. LP indicated the IFCA has to tread a line between fishing interests and conservation interests, which is why she restated this would be a matter for her Chief Officer to address. LP would be willing to source a relevant document which indicates the 'trigger point' which would be needed to be reached before action by the IFCA would be taken.

9. *Historic England update* *Terry Newman*

- 9.1 TN began by saying that Lundy's two Protected Wreck sites, and that of the *Iona II* in particular, remained popular with divers. He welcomed Maggs Ashton back (on behalf of Ilfracombe Sub-Aqua Club) to the list of licencees, as well as a new name on the list.

There are now six licencees listed for both of the two Protected Wreck sites. These are:

Mike Deaton (Appledore Sub-Aqua Club)
Fiona Hamilton-Matthews
Lundy Island Company (which covers several charter boat skippers)
Maggs Ashton (Ilfracombe Sub-Aqua Club)
Dr Sam Walder-Hills
James Hucke

- 9.2 TN explained he would be attending the Management Forum meeting next week in person and would be bringing several copies of a new Historic England leaflet about Protected Wrecks in Devon and Cornwall with him to leave at the Shore Office.

10. North Devon Biosphere Andy Bell & Hannah Nash

- 10.1 AB has been discussing with DG about including Lundy as one of the Biosphere Reserve's 'core areas'. This proposal will be put forward as part of the Biosphere Review which will take place in September. Further details about what this might entail need to be agreed before then between AB and DG.
- 10.2 AB informed the Group that just yesterday (7th May), the White Cross offshore windfarm development had received planning consent from both the Marine Management Organisation and North Devon Council as the local Planning Authority. This included the proposed route of the onshore cable, coming ashore at the northern end of Saunton Beach and across the northern end of Braunton Burrows. The consent comes with a number of conditions which still need to be fulfilled by the development partners (Cobra and Flotation Energy). The next major step in the process will be acquiring a licence from the Crown Estate. The (maximum of 8) floating turbines are due to come on-stream some time in 2029.
- DG's understanding was that the turbines would be about 35 miles to the SW of Lundy, so there would be very little visual impact of the site from the island.
- 10.3 The Biosphere's nature tourism officer, Sarah Jordan, will be coming over to Lundy on the 20th May, to join a photographer who would have been on the island for a few days prior to that, taking some images for nature tourism 'packages' which will be available for businesses to use in their promotional materials. Sarah is hoping to meet with Lundy's Conservation Team to discuss 'astro-tourism' opportunities [*Lundy being a Dark Sky Discovery Site, designated in 2014 - RJ*]. JP confirmed he would be happy to meet with Sarah. AB mentioned there might be the possibility of helping fund the acquisition of a telescope suitable for star gazing.
- AB also announced that he would be hosting a small group of important visitors from Sweden and that he was planning to bring them over to Lundy for an informal 'look-see' on Sunday 1st June on board the *Obsession* charter boat. DG pointed out that that was the day when there was due to be a NATO exercise taking place in the outer Bristol Channel (including Lundy and a landing on Saunton Sands/Braunton Burrows) with about 15 warships involved, so that could be an interesting day! 200 Royal Marines are due to descend on the island before being transported by landing craft over to the mainland.
- 10.4 HN then introduced the topic of the Marine Wildlife Accreditation Scheme and explained she'd been talking with Joe and Tara about how the scheme could be developed. Two training days had recently been held with about 35 people attending, one in Ilfracombe and one in Appledore, the latter venue hosting far more people than the former. Beccy MacDonald was the tutor for these in-person courses. One thing that has come to light though is that the scheme is designed for attendees to renew their accreditation every year, yet HN believes some are thinking that they only need to attend the course once and that's them for life!
- Renewal is now possible to do on-line (much appreciated by those who've used this), a process which requires a number of test/quiz questions to be answered. These include knowledge of things which might have changed during the previous 12 months. However, some people are not doing this yet are still advertising their business as having the full accreditation. HN explained this is causing quite a few headaches, as those who've followed the correct procedure for renewing feel at a disadvantage to those who haven't.

The suggestion was made that the stickers which bear notice of the accreditation, and which are designed to be displayed on the windows of cabins of charter boats, should display the current year; that way, it would be easy for day-trippers to know which boats were 'legitimate'. HN explained this was now the intention, as well as having a list on the Biosphere website of all compliant operators of the scheme.

DG wondered if having the scheme updates happening every year might be too frequent and asked if there had been any feedback about that. He suggested maybe an annual newsletter with updates could be sent out to those affiliated with the scheme, with a full course being run every two or three years. RI asked if the course involved a cost in case that was deterring people from becoming affiliated, though HN said there wasn't. However, it is an expensive course to run (with estimated costs for 2025 at £2,000+), so HN is having to look to funding bodies for financial long-term support to run future courses. Another consideration is whether the course could be put on-line completely. The course at present lasts for half a day (3 hours) and comes with additional biosecurity training given by the RSPB. A fully on-line course would also do away with the cost of tutors and their travel expenses to be attending in person and the cost of hiring a venue.

HN also mentioned she'd been discussing this problem with Sue Sayer of the Seal Research Trust (based in Cornwall) who promotes the WiSE scheme (on which the Biosphere scheme is based), but who told HN that more boats in the north Devon area are associated with the Biosphere scheme than the WiSE scheme. MA added that the WiSE course costs £120 to attend. AB suggested that peer-pressure on those abusing the scheme could be employed (for instance when such craft were getting too close to hauled-out seals) with customers being urged to stay away from such operators. On-line feedback on trips could be encouraged (either positive or negative) in a similar way to how TripAdvisor works.

- 10.5 The Biosphere's Marine Road Map. HN explained that this was effectively a 5-year plan and a 10-year vision for the Biosphere's coast and marine projects, with input from the Marine Forum (representatives of marine and coastal groups from the north Devon area). HN plans to circulate this in the near future after it has been approved by senior colleagues. Lundy has contributed to this as well.

11. The condition of Lundy's marine life Keith Hiscock

- 11.1 KH explained that he was a guest at the annual Skomer MCZ Advisory Committee meeting held in Pembrokeshire last week. There were 28 participants at the meeting. He was particularly interested in the presentation given on pink sea fans because Skomer's sea fans are also now 'in distress' as are those at Lundy. Kaila Wheatley Kornblum, an Exeter University PhD student, gave the presentation on this topic. The island of Skomer is a National Nature Reserve owned and managed by the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales which employs a full-time Warden and other staff who look after the topside of the island (seabirds in particular). However, on the marine side, the Marine Conservation Zone has a staff of four people (led by the marine warden Kate Lock) employed by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) who work out of an office in Martin's Haven. The marine team also has a hardboat (*Skalmay*) at their disposal.
- 11.2 There are many areas of marine biological interest which Skomer and Lundy share. However, there is not yet a designation order for the Marine Conservation Zone at Skomer. The fisheries byelaws are determined by the Welsh government (Wales does not have its own IFCAs). It remains a MCZ in name only, with most fisheries byelaws inherited from the old Sea Fisheries Committee (pre-2009).
- 11.3 A lot more long-term marine monitoring projects happen at Skomer than take place at Lundy. These projects have looked at changes apparent in selected species since

1990 (when Skomer was declared a statutory Marine Nature Reserve, as Lundy had been in 1986). Consequently, the MCZ team now have data which go back 35 years on many species. The data include information on species abundances from year to year, whether ‘crashes’ have occurred or whether species have disappeared altogether. One such example given, of which KH had made a note, was of a patch of red sea fingers *Alcyonium glomeratum* (which also occurs at Lundy) disappearing completely. He thought this could have been the result of a disease. There are signs that those colonies at Lundy are also suffering in a similar way. Another study has shown that the numbers of sea fan sea slugs *Candiella odhneri* have increase exponentially in recent years. KH asked divers to be keep an eye out for these very well camouflaged nudibranchs on Lundy sea fans.

- 11.4 Whilst the MCZ team have relied to a large extent on Seasearch volunteer divers to assist them in recording a lot of this information, KH explained there will be no Seasearch dives at Skomer this season (and possibly elsewhere too). This is because the Marine Conservation Society now has a new Seasearch Co-ordinator in place who has “a more cautious view of health and safety matters”.

- 11.5 Captive breeding of pink sea fans. This has been undertaken by researchers from Exeter University and at the Horniman Museum in south London. Kaila Wheatley Kornblum talked about this research and how the captive breeding is providing important clues regarding the breeding requirements of this species. Research at Skomer has shown that 55% of sea fans are being used by bull huss/nursehound for attaching their eggs to (a noticeable increase over recent years), with the spent egg cases remaining attached for some time after they’ve hatched. This is something that has also been noted at Lundy. At the Skomer meeting, the MCZ team there were wondering if they should be snipping off the empty egg cases. However, this was not thought to be the reason why the sea fans were in a poor state. DG suggested it should be possible to undertake a trial by snipping off the empty egg cases in one area whilst leaving them intact in another and comparing results from the two areas.

KH’s hypothesis to explain the lack of recovery of the sea fans at Lundy is that male and female sea fan individuals are too far apart and as a result, the eggs and sperm from each are not meeting. The Skomer annual marine monitoring report 24/25 (see below for link) states that the pink sea fan within the Skomer MCZ is “in decline and in unfavourable condition”. KH believes this same status should be given to Lundy’s pink sea fans. The Skomer team are supporting the study of the pink sea fans with the intention that the results will be published as a paper in a scientific journal.

<https://nrwcmstv13-a3hwekacajb3frbw.a02.azurefd.net/zbqdiior/skomer-marine-conservation-zone-annual-report-2024-v2.pdf>

RI added that the one citizen science project for divers to get involved in at Lundy (as advertised on the new MPA website) was a project recording the ‘health’ of pink sea fans. Participants would be asked to record the dimensions of individual sea fans and the degree of entanglement or overgrowth by other organisms. Recorded data could be uploaded by means of an on-line recording form which could be accompanied by photographs.

- 11.6 KH carried on by saying that the Skomer team also monitor commercial fishing, diving, angling and anchoring activities. They are currently exploring the possibility of setting up an ‘exclusion zone’ for potentially damaging activities, which would probably have similar restrictions to the No Take Zone at Lundy.
- 11.7 In conclusion, KH recommended that those interested in marine management should look through the Skomer annual report, especially as many issues arose at Lundy as

well. It is likely to make you feel green with envy as there are so many more monitoring projects happening there which would be nice to have happening at Lundy.

- 11.8 JW explained she now had a better idea of where KH was coming from when he was commenting earlier about the condition assessment for the Lundy SAC/MCZ. She wanted to add to her earlier report that Natural England now have the ability to address the “structure and function, presence and abundance of key structural and influential species”. Her colleagues had been waiting for guidance to complete this attribute for Natural England’s Conservation Advice packages. They are currently looking at which sites to prioritise (given there are 53 MPAs within the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly region) to update their Conservation Advice attributes. To that end, both Plymouth and Lundy are being put forward as priority sites to address that particular attribute. The concerns over the pink sea fans at Lundy are likely to come under this attribute. JW explained that, depending on the guidance received, this could act as a trigger for a future review of the condition assessment of Lundy.

As things are at present, the condition assessment for Lundy is ‘favourable’ for circalittoral rock. However, the evidence hasn’t been clear – some surveys indicate declines in pink sea fans while others indicate positive recruitment – and it may be that further investigation is needed to clarify the situation.

KH asked JW if she knew if the sunset cup coral was one of the key influential species being looked at - JW wasn’t sure. JW explained that Natural England still were not sure what they would be able to resource this financial year but she reiterated that team discussions had flagged Lundy and Plymouth for further attention for that particular attribute.

KH went on to explain that he had considerable knowledge of Lundy’s marine life in the past, dating back to the late 1960s. He considered the mid-1980s was when the marine life was at its most diverse and appeared most healthy. The sunset cup coral is a nationally rare species which has been monitored for almost 40 years at Lundy, and over that time numbers have declined to just 30% of the original number described. He thought that should have some bearing on the overall condition assessment for the circalittoral rock feature. KH wondered if Natural England had a definition of what an ‘influential species’ is. JW said it had been defined thus: “*Structural species form part of the habitat structure or help define a key biotope. Influential species are likely to have a key role affecting the structure and function of the habitat.*” The reason why they haven’t been included is that Natural England field staff have been waiting for a national project that will identify those species in association with the criteria defined, based on a paper written by Roger Covey back in 2016. There will be a lot of work required to update all of the conservation packages now that the guidance has come through.

Lastly, KH wondered if JW had seen a “think piece” published in *The Conversation* in July 2024 entitled “Five ways to improve marine conservation in Britain”? JW said she hadn’t yet. KH said he knew some Natural England staff had read it and that they were keeping ‘stumm’ about it! *[For JW and others who might have missed this, here’s a link to the article:]*

<https://theconversation.com/five-ways-to-improve-marine-conservation-around-britain-232756>

12. Any Other Business

- 12.1 DG expanded on the planned forthcoming NATO exercise, which has already been spoken of (see #10.3 above). It was to be for one day, with lots of marines embarking onto assault craft at Lundy and then making their way across to Saunton Sands. DG

is keen for it to happen as he may then be able to call in a favour or two from the marines next year! RI wondered if the landing craft would be dropping their anchors, but DG said they wouldn't be needing to, although the mother ships further offshore would be dropping theirs.

- 12.2 The new Lundy MPA website. RI explained he'd been working on a new website for the MPA, designing the layout and assimilating content for the site. He had hoped the site would have been finished by the time of today's meeting but it's taken longer than expected. He explained he was hoping that a 'beta version' of the site was going to be checked and tested shortly by JP, TMW, DG and KH. Chris Dee, who constructed the Lundy Bird Observatory site, is putting the site together.

[The site is now 'live' and can be found at: www.lundympa.or.uk – RI]

There's a lot of information on the site which RI hoped members of the Advisory Group would find useful. He explained that the main headings were:

Home / History & Management / Marine Life / Shipwrecks / Get involved / Resources

Each of these headings then had drop-down menus and even sub-menus. The Resources section will have a Bibliography which will consist of a searchable database of all reports and articles that have been written since 1970, many of which will be available to access and to download. This same section will have copies of the Marine Management Plan, the MPA's Zoning Scheme and the Code of Conduct available to be downloaded. There will also be dive site descriptions for ten of the most popular dive sites; a standard sightings recording form (to which photos can be uploaded); and all the past minutes of these Advisory Group meetings, dating back to 1985. There will also be a selection of videos to view about the Lundy MPA, several of which are now up on Youtube.

LP added that she had been contacted by RI some time ago to check the content of the Fisheries section he'd written for the site and she apologised for it taking so long for her colleagues to do this. The IFCA had also been preparing information for the Tamar Estuary Group and the Exe Estuary Group and have been trying to standardise their contributions to these groups as well. She assured RI that he'd be receiving something very soon!

Finally on this topic, RI suggested that future marine leaflets produced by the Landmark Trust for Lundy could feature a QR code on them to link people directly to the MPA website.

- 12.3 No Take Zone film. The film *Safeguarding Our Seas: Lessons from Lundy* was released in February 2023. The film was commissioned as part of the Marine Festival and was first shown at the SW Marine Ecosystems conference in Plymouth in April 2023. As well as a 30 minute version, a 12 minute version has now been produced, making it eligible for entry into the Edinburgh Conservation Film Festival which took place on 19th April. The 30 min. version was also shown at the Ocean Film Festival in Newquay, Cornwall at the beginning of February. One outcome of this showing was that I managed to persuade the Newquay Marine Group, who are a group of volunteers who do beach litter picks and hold rockpooling events, to come over to Lundy. So 26 of them have now booked on a day trip on 28th June.

An open air film festival ("Save the Waves") is being planned at Croyde on the evenings of 15th and 16th August, when a number of surfing and marine conservation films will be shown in a camping field projected onto a huge screen. Again, the Lundy No Take Zone film will be shown at that too. HN added that during the day on the Saturday the organisers (which includes the Biosphere) were planning to host a number of stalls and events all about conservation issues raised by the films.

- 12.4 RI wanted to remind those attending that, in his role as Secretary to the Advisory Group, he reports on these meetings to the Lundy Management Forum whose next meeting will be next week on Tuesday, 13th May on Lundy. This is how the Advisory Group links in with the Management Forum in the overall management of both Lundy and the MPA.

[RI would like to draw attention to the new logo for the MPA appearing at the top of the first page of these minutes. This was designed by Tara McEvoy-Wilding and will appear on the website as well.]

The Chair, KH, thanked all for coming along (including those joining on-line) and thanked MA and the Ilfracombe Dive Club for their hospitality. The meeting closed at 9:15 pm.

The date of the next meeting will be on **Monday 20th October 2025** at 7:00 pm at the Clubhouse of the Ilfracombe Dive Club. *[Note that Tuesday 21st October had originally been proposed for this meeting but the Clubhouse is not available on this evening.]*