

REPORT OF THE LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP

By

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The Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group consists of representatives from a wide range of organisations, all of which have an interest in the waters around the island. Current 'membership' consists of representatives from the following groups (though interested parties other than those listed here are always welcome to attend meetings):

British Sub-Aqua Club; Devon Sea Fisheries Committee; Devon Wildlife Trust; English Nature; Hartland Heritage Coast Service; Landmark Trust; Local Dive Charter Interests; Local Sea Fishing Interests; The Lundy Company Ltd.; Lundy Field Society; Marine Archaeological Interests; Marine Conservation Society; Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; Environment Agency; National Trust; South-West Federation of Sea Anglers; Torridge District Council; Worldwide Fund for Nature (UK).

Meetings of the Advisory Group take place twice a year. In 1998 the meetings were held on 2nd April and 13th October at the offices of Torridge District Council in Bideford. The agenda for each meeting varies depending on what matters are of current interest, but always includes a 6-month report from the Marine Nature Reserve (MNR) given by the Warden (see Warden's Report in this volume). Meetings of the MNR Management Group are planned to take place soon after those of the Advisory Group (wherever possible), so that relevant matters which arise during Advisory Group meetings can be taken up and discussed at Management Group meetings. Meetings of the Management Group took place on 13th March and on 30th October.

The main points which have been discussed by the Advisory Group during the year (other than those likely to be included in the Warden's Report) are summarised below:

The new jetty in the Landing Bay - the Landmark Trust had managed to secure funding to undertake major repairs and improvements to the Beach Road, to build a new jetty in the Landing Bay, and to build a new Visitor/Dive Centre at the landward end of the jetty. Planning permission was sought from Torridge District Council in June, following an environmental impact assessment in April. The marine ecological aspects of the impact assessment study concluded that, though the jetty would obviously have some impact on the seabed in its immediate locality, there would be little discernible impact beyond this. No marine species of particular nature conservation interest were found during surveys of the shore surrounding the Landing Bay and the subtidal area within it. It was noted that, during the construction phase involving drilling and the placement of piles, suspended sediment and spoil from the drilling must be contained as much as possible. English Nature approved the conclusions of the study and kept a careful eye on operations during the start of the construction

phase later in the year.

Representatives of charter dive boats expressed their concern that the jetty appeared to be designed for use by the Oldenburg only and that access by other craft, such as their own, would be impossible during low water periods. The Landmark Trust pointed out that, had funding allowed, greater provision for other vessels would have been incorporated into the design, but this was not possible within the constraints of the project budget.

Review of the MNR Zoning Scheme - English Nature decided to delay the revision of the Zoning Scheme until next year (1999), so that any changes could be introduced in line with the revision of the Management Plan which is currently underway. The Management Plan covers the whole island, combining the needs of the island's Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the MNR and the Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Fishing pressure within the MNR - this is a regular topic of discussion within the Group. At the April meeting, measures to help conserve lobster stocks off the N. Devon coast were discussed. A close season, from October to May, was being suggested - an idea which came from the pot fishermen of Clovelly and Ilfracombe. This was welcomed by many as a step in the right direction if stocks were to be conserved, but that it may not work in practice: suspending fishing during the winter months may only serve to increase fishing effort during the summer months. Thus the actual number of pots around Lundy during the summer may actually increase rather than decrease. The greatest concern of conservationists was not so much the number of lobsters within the MNR, but the potential damage that may be caused to other marine life by the setting and lifting of pots on the sea bed.

The Devon Sea Fisheries Committee introduced three new byelaws (for N. & S. Devon waters) in September 1998 concerned with the conservation of lobster stocks. These were:

- A ban on the removal of any 'V'-notched lobster;
- A ban on the removal of any lobster with a carapace length less than 87 mm long (increased from 85 mm), with this minimum length increasing to 90 mm in two years' time; and
- A ban on the removal of any berried lobster (i.e. a female carrying eggs).

Work within the MNR - the re-establishment of the sublittoral photographic monitoring site at the Knoll Pins took place at the start of May. The animal communities present in the canyon here, which include the rare yellow cup coral *Leptopsammia pruvoti*, are of particular nature conservation importance. The team of divers fitted new ringbolts in place along a horizontal transect, so that the area of rock immediately above and below this line can be easily relocated and photographed. A set of photographs was taken along the transect, a task last undertaken about ten years previously. Another monitoring site was established at the Knoll Pins to investigate changes over time in communities featuring branching sponges, Ross 'coral', red sea fingers and sea fans. A 2 m x 5 m near-vertical section of bedrock was chosen for this, from approximately 15-20 m depth below chart datum.

MCS Diving Working Party to the MNR, 29 June - 3 July 1998 - a summary of the work undertaken by this group is given elsewhere in this volume. (page 89.)

If there are any points which members of the LFS would like to see raised at future meetings of the Advisory Group, they should contact the Group's Hon. Secretary, Robert Irving, at the address given above.