

## **REPORT OF THE LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP, 2002**

**By**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The topics discussed by the Marine Nature Reserve (MNR) Advisory Group during 2002 are summarised. They include the proposal for a No Take Zone off the east side of the island, fishing activities, diving activities, sea fans, moorings and new promotional material for the MNR.

*Keywords: Marine Nature Reserve, Advisory Group, Sea fans, Fishing, Diving, No Take Zone.*

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. 'Membership' during 2002 consisted of representatives from the following groups (though interested parties other than those listed here are welcome to attend meetings by invitation):

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

The Advisory Group was established in 1985 and until 1994 was known as the Lundy Marine Consultation Group. The Advisory Group has four main aims:

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 Group of the Marine Nature Reserve.

Meetings of the Advisory Group take place twice a year. In 2002 the meetings were held on 18<sup>th</sup> April (the 16<sup>th</sup> such meeting of the Advisory Group and the 34<sup>th</sup> of the former Consultation Group) and 17<sup>th</sup> October at the offices of Torridge District Council in Bideford. The agenda for each meeting of the Advisory Group varies depending on what matters are of current interest, but always includes a 6-month report from the MNR given by the Warden (see Warden's Report elsewhere in this volume). Wherever possible, meetings of the MNR Management Group are planned to take place soon after those of the Advisory Group, 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 during 2002 took place on 19<sup>th</sup> June and 18<sup>th</sup> 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:

a THE PROPOSAL FOR A NO-TAKE ZONE OFF THE EAST SIDE OF THE ISLAND

The proposal for a No-Take Zone (NTZ) off the east side of the island was first discussed by the Group in April 2001 (Irving, 2003). Since then, a formal proposal has been drawn up by Devon Sea Fisheries Committee. It had been advertised in local papers and *Fishing News*, and Fisheries Officers have been consulting in person with fishermen and other interested parties. No formal objections to the proposal were received and the proposal has now been submitted to Brussels for EC approval. If approval is granted, then the byelaw prohibiting the taking of any sea fish from within the NTZ would be expected to come into force early in 2003.

b FISHING ACTIVITIES

The Warden reported that there had been a high level of potting activity (for crab and lobster) by four boats through the spring and early summer, particularly off the north and south ends of the Island and to a lesser degree the west side. One boat was seen dropping occasional strings of pots close inshore on the east side in an area where potting was discouraged under the Code of Conduct. During May and June, two trawlers were seen working outside the MNR off the east side.

c DIVING ACTIVITIES

Atrocious weather through much of May and June meant many early season dive trips were cancelled but there was steady activity through the summer. The charter boats

*Jessica Hettie*, *Lundy Murrulet* and *Our Unity* were regular visitors, along with the boats of local dive clubs and the sea cadet training vessel *Pride of Bristol*. A number of RIBs from diving clubs further afield also made the trip across from the mainland. Those groups that did make it over were generally very pleased with the improved facilities, especially the new compressor which is easy to operate and very quiet!

#### d SEA FANS

Concern was raised about the reported 'ill health' of many of the sea fans *Eunicella verrucosa* present within the MNR, particularly those growing close the east coast from the Quarries north to Gannets' Rock. This is one of the few marine species protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act and it has also been identified as a priority Biodiversity Action Plan species. Recent studies by Marine Conservation Society volunteer divers, backed up by observations from Dr Keith Hiscock, have revealed that many of the sea fans were heavily fouled by drift seaweed and attached bushy bryozoans, barnacles and sea squirts. Some were entirely dead. It is unclear why the sea fans are in this poor condition. When compared to other sea fans growing at other sites in the south-west, the Lundy population came out worst in terms of their overall condition (Wood, 2002). These findings had been reported to English Nature, the nature conservation agency responsible for the management of the MNR.

#### e MOORINGS

Continuing the discussions first raised by the Group in 1999 with regard to the positioning of a number of permanent moorings around the island (primarily for the use of dive boats), English Nature had agreed to the funding of six such moorings. The most suitable make appeared to be a 'Seaflex' mooring, best described as resembling a buoy fixed to an immovable concrete base by means of a giant rubber band. However, there still remained difficulties over who would be responsible for the maintenance of any such moorings and what the insurance liability implications might be for boats using these moorings. It was decided to give the matter some more thought before agreeing to the introduction of permanent moorings.

#### f THE MANAGEMENT GROUP FOR THE MNR

It was proposed at the meeting of the Management Group in June (2002) that English Heritage be invited to attend meetings of the Management Group on a regular basis. English Heritage (which had subsumed the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in England) is responsible for the two protected wrecks within the MNR. The other bodies represented on the Management Group are: Devon Sea Fisheries Committee, English Nature, Environment Agency, Landmark Trust/Lundy Company, and the National Trust.

## g NEW PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS FOR THE MNR

The following materials have all been produced by English Nature as part of their continuing management of the MNR.

*Video* – A new 12-minute promotional video had been produced for the MNR in October 2001, entitled “*Lundy – an island to treasure*”. This was to be shown on the MS Oldenburg, in order to introduce the MNR to all visitors coming to the island. The video was filmed and produced by Sue Daly.

*Interpretation boards* – New MNR interpretation boards have been installed at the Lundy Shore Offices in Bideford and Ilfracombe, as well as on the MS Oldenburg.

*Education Packs* - These have been designed to encourage schools to visit Lundy either for the day or for longer, to study all aspects of the island. It was decided to expand the remit of these (from covering just the marine aspects) so that they might act as a hook to schools who might not feel it was worth the time, money and effort just to study one aspect of the island, but would visit if they could kill many birds with one stone. 250 Primary packs and 50 Secondary packs have been produced for free distribution to local schools.

*Dive Guide* - A new softback book entitled *The Scuba Diver's Guide to Lundy Marine Nature Reserve* by Paul Kay was available for sale (at £5) from mid-summer 2002. Besides being a general introduction to the MNR, it features a guide to ten dive sites around the island and has an identification section with colour photographs of 120 common and rare species.

*Wetsuits* – These are due to be replaced as they are beginning to wear rather badly. English Nature has ear-marked some funds for this, but it was suggested that it may be possible to arrange for sponsorship of these, as a number of well-known wetsuit manufacturers were based in the south-west.

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.

## REFERENCES

- Irving, R.A., 2003. Report of the Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group, 2000 and 2001. *Annual Report of the Lundy Field Society*, 51, 120-126.
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