

REPORT OF THE LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP

The Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group (LMNRAG) provides a forum for the discussion of all matters relating to the island's waters and shores. The Group includes representatives from the Island (the Lundy Company), Natural England, the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee, the National Trust, the Marine Biological Association, the Lundy Field Society, Devon Wildlife Trust, Torridge District Council, dive charter boat skippers, divers, anglers and fishermen. The Group meets twice a year: in 2009 it met on 4 June and 13 October in Bideford, c/o Torridge District Council. The Lundy Field Society provides the secretariat for the LMNRAG.

The following issues were brought to the attention of the Group and discussed during the two meetings in 2009.

Fishing activity

The Warden reported pots being present within the Marine Nature Reserve (a permitted activity) throughout the winter of 2008/09, with the number of pots increasing during the summer months. Following recommendations from the Advisory Group, the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee are requiring pots to be identifiable from the surface by showing their respective boat name and number on the marker buoys. This practice will assist with the identification of pots, particularly by island-based patrols. It was noted that there continued to be a lack of representatives of fishermen and anglers on the Group. The Secretary had made an effort to invite named fishermen, but thought that few had any desire to want to attend sit-down meetings. The North Devon Fishermen's Association was represented on a regular basis, however; and the South-West Federation of Sea Anglers had an invitation to attend every meeting but had rarely attended.

No Take Zone

No monitoring of the No Take Zone (NTZ) had been undertaken this year as Natural England take stock of the findings of the first five years of monitoring since its establishment in 2003.

Lobster tagging

In tandem with the existence of the No Take Zone, the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee has continued its lobster tagging project which started last year, led by Sarah Clark. In 2008 a total of 905 lobsters were tagged at Lundy and at sites on the N. Devon mainland. At the end of 2008, 80 tagged lobsters had been recaptured by fishermen and by October 2009 a further 122 lobsters had been recaptured. This gives a recapture rate of approximately 22%. Results analysed up to July 2009 indicate that most lobsters tagged and recaptured are only moving short distances averaging 2.5 km, with a few more nomadic individuals moving greater distances (max. 28.4 km). In 2009, a further 690 lobsters were tagged within the MNR of which 420 were tagged within the NTZ. Some of the lobsters caught within the NTZ showed signs of shell disease with a few being limp and moribund, so a number of haemolymph (blood) samples were taken for further analysis.

Seal survey, 2008-09

An independent consultant, Stephen Westcott, visited the island on a monthly basis for 13 months to discover the ways in which the grey seals use the island. He concluded that between 40-50 pups are born each year, the pupping period starting at the end of August and continuing to mid-October. The total number of seals at Lundy fluctuates throughout the year but is in the region of 125. Some of the population is likely to be resident at Lundy, whilst others roam up to

Wales, across to Ireland and down to other south-west coasts. A photo catalogue for identifying individual seals was compiled which can be added to in future years.

The Marine and Coastal Access Act

Towards the end of the year, the enactment of the Marine and Coastal Access Act on 17 November 2009 was an important milestone in marine conservation legislation, being ten years in the making. The Act will provide, amongst other things, for the establishment of a network of Marine Conservation Zones around the country. Lundy's 'Marine Nature Reserve' title is due to be dropped early in 2010 when exactly the same area around the island will become the country's first Marine Conservation Zone. More news on this change in next year's Report.

Raising awareness

Lundy (and its marine interest in particular) has featured heavily in the media this year, appearing in programmes such as BBC Coast, The One Show and Countryfile. Articles also appeared in British wildlife and diving magazines. A 'splash-in' underwater photography competition was held on 20 June which proved a great success. It is hoped this will become an annual event. The refurbishment of the Beach Building Interpretation Centre is now in full swing with a planned re-opening in early summer 2010. See also the Warden's report elsewhere in this volume.

SAC & NTZ monitoring review

Towards the end of the year, Natural England let a contract to Haskoning (UK) Ltd. to review monitoring studies within the Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which shares the same boundary around the island as the Marine Nature Reserve and the No Take Zone. Natural England has a legal obligation to monitor and assess the condition of certain features of the SAC and the NTZ on a six-yearly cycle. Besides other matters, it is intended for the review to recommend various methodologies by which monitoring is undertaken and also the frequency of repeat studies in future.

ROBERT IRVING
Honorary Secretary
Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group
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