

## REPORT OF THE MARINE CONSERVATION ZONE ADVISORY GROUP

The Lundy Marine Conservation Zone Advisory Group (LMCZAG) (formerly known as the Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group) provides a forum for the discussion of all matters relating to the island's waters and shores. The Group includes representatives from the Lundy Company, Natural England, the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee, the Lundy Field Society, the Marine Biological Association, Devon Wildlife Trust, Torrridge District Council, commercial fishing interests, dive charter boat skippers and local dive clubs. The Group meets twice a year: in 2010 it met on 22 April and 21 October in Bideford. The Lundy Field Society provides the secretariat for the LMCZAG.

A variety of issues were brought to the attention of the Group and discussed during the two meetings held in 2010. The second meeting in October happened to be the 50th meeting of the former Lundy Marine Consultation Group, which had started life in 1985; and was also the 32nd meeting of the subsequent Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group.

Following the introduction of the Marine and Coastal Access Act at the end of 2009, the Lundy Marine Nature Reserve (MNR) ceased to be on the 12th January 2010 and its title changed to the Lundy Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ). Apart from this change of name, no other changes have been made – the regulations which governed the MNR will continue unaffected, though over the next 18 months there will be an opportunity to consider changes both to the boundaries of the MCZ and to its conservation objectives. Lundy is the first such MCZ in the country, although many more will follow in the next two years. In recognition of this fact, the Fisheries Minister Huw Irranca-Davies visited the island for a day in March 2010, together with representatives from Natural England, Finding Sanctuary and the Marine Conservation Society.

At the end of 2009, Haskoning UK were commissioned by Natural England to undertake a full review of Lundy's marine monitoring programme. A report was produced in early 2010 which recommended monitoring regimes for each of the island's marine special features. Natural England will now use the report to formulate their monitoring programme over the next few years, the extent and frequency of projects being largely dependent upon their varying annual budget.

Devon Sea Fisheries Committee's lobster tagging study continued in 2010 with two surveys being undertaken in association with Swansea University, who are investigating the impacts of climate change on carapace disease in Crustacea. The results of this work should be known next year. Sarah Clark of DSFC is currently working up the results of the past three years of the tagging programme and has also been investigating lobster larvae collection using light traps.

A diving survey of sunset cup corals *Leptopsammia pruvoti* was undertaken by Sea-Scope Marine Environmental Consultants at the end of August at the Knoll Pins and in the vicinity of Gannets' Rock Pinnacle. Three years on from the last monitoring event, it was found that, from all of the sites visited, there had been an overall decline in the population of sunset cup corals of 4%, though this represented an increase in numbers (from new juveniles) at some sites, with declines at others. The most dramatic decline has been as one site on the Knoll Pins where numbers have fallen by 78% between 1984 and 2009. A survey of pink sea fans undertaken at the same time found there to have been a decline in the density of sea fans of 15% off the Quarries (an area where they have thrived in the past), as well as a decline in their overall health since 2005. Another study carried out at the same time was of the proportion of the two dominant species of kelp present off the east coast, *Laminaria hyperborea* (whose distribution is centred in colder, northern waters) and *Laminaria ochroleuca* (whose distribution is centred in warmer,

more southerly waters). In 2004, *L. hyperborea* was found to outnumber *L. ochroleuca* by 18 plants to 1 on the north side of Rat Island. In 2010 however, the proportion had changed significantly to being just 4 to 1 at the same site, reflecting the gradually increasing abundance of the southern species and the decreasing abundance of the northern species.

In September, a team from Natural England surveyed a number of shore transects at various sites around the island, repeating a survey which had been carried out in 2000. The presence and extent of shore biotopes was noted and photographed.

An account of the annual 'Splash-In' and the re-opening of the beach building can be found elsewhere in this edition.

At the Group's October meeting, Chris Mandry of the Ilfracombe Sub-Aqua Club presented a historical review of the marine nature reserve, from the initial ideas of establishing one being put forward in 1969 to the designation of the Marine Conservation Zone in 2010. Plans were discussed for 2011 when there will be good cause for celebrating the 40 years since the voluntary marine nature reserve was recognised and 25 years since the statutory reserve was established.

Unusual sightings which were brought to the attention of the Group during the year included very large numbers of spider crabs *Maja squinado* at the end of August off the east coast; the presence of a triggerfish (a species more commonly seen in the Mediterranean) on the wreck of the *Carmine Filomena* off the island's SE corner; and common eels *Anguilla anguilla* being found amongst boulders in the Devil's Kitchen.

During the year, a number of studies have been undertaken by the developers RWE in the vicinity of the proposed Atlantic Array wind-farm to the north of the island. The results of these surveys will be incorporated into the public consultation exercise which will take place during the second half of 2011. A response to the initial consultation had been made by Dr Keith Hiscock on behalf of the Lundy Field Society, expressing a number of concerns.

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Honorary Secretary  
Lundy Marine Conservation Zone Advisory Group  
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