

REPORT OF THE LUNDY MARINE CONSERVATION ZONE ADVISORY GROUP

The Lundy Marine Conservation Zone Advisory Group (LMCZAG) 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/Landmark Trust), Natural England, the Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority, the Lundy Field Society, the Marine Biological Association, English Heritage, Devon Wildlife Trust, Torrington District Council, commercial fishing interests, dive charter boat skippers and local dive clubs. The Group meets twice a year: in 2013 it met on 29 April on board the *MS Oldenburg* alongside Bideford Quay, and on 15 October at the Ilfracombe and North Devon Sub-Aqua Club, Ilfracombe. 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 2013. These are summarised below:

New faces

At the Group's first meeting at the end of April, we welcomed Beccy MacDonald (Lundy Warden) and also Ruth Porter (Natural England's Marine Adviser for Lundy/North Devon). We also welcomed Rick Morris of MARINElife (a charitable organization monitoring cetaceans and seabirds which has recently started regular monthly recording trips on board the *MS Oldenburg*); Robert Durrant representing Coastwise North Devon (a group championing the north Devon coast and marine environment); and Dave Jenkins of the Morte Wildlife Group.

Researching dolphins and porpoises around Lundy

Two MSc students from the University of Plymouth, Rosie Graham and John Mellor, spent six weeks on the island monitoring the movements of cetaceans around the island using both visual sightings and underwater audio recorded on two devices known as C-PODs, deployed on the wrecks of the *Robert* (which lies off the east coast) and the *Ethel* (off the SW coast). This study carried on from similar research undertaken in 2012. In that year, the C-POD attached to the *Ethel* broke free and was thought to have been lost for good. However, it turned up off the coast of Galway in August, though unfortunately it was too damaged to be re-useable. The data collected from these C-PODs will be assisting Dr Nick Tregenza (University of Exeter/Chelonia Ltd) with further development of the system and in understanding the different signatures produced by the cetacean species that travel around Lundy. Anecdotal reports from other sea users gave rise to thinking that the number of sightings of cetaceans in 2013 had been down on previous years.

The Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)

A consultation period for the MCZ (asking for opinions as to which particular marine species or habitats should be afforded special recognition under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009) ended on 31 March 2013. A submission had been made on behalf of the LFS with primary input from Dr Keith Hiscock and Dr David George. Although the Lundy MCZ had been designated on 12 January 2010 (by default, as the Marine Nature Reserve automatically became the Marine Conservation Zone), the habitats and species that were to be protected in the Lundy MCZ were not identified at the time. So when the 'first tranche' of 27 MCZs were designated on 21 November 2013, the Lundy MCZ was also listed. What came as a surprise was that just one feature was named – the spiny lobster or crawfish *Palinurus elephas*. We are hoping that further explanation as to why only this feature has been highlighted will be provided to the Group during 2014.

Results of subtidal sediment sampling

At the April meeting, a report was presented by Dr Ben Green of the Environment Agency/Natural England on the results of grab sampling of subtidal sediments undertaken in July 2012. The majority of the sites were of sand or of coarse sand, with only small amounts of mud being present. High lead levels were found in the Landing Bay and just north, high chromium levels throughout, and copper at levels rated as 'potentially harmful' to the environment at many of the sites. However, compared to nearby sites (Plymouth and Severn), Lundy is relatively low in contaminants and could be said to be 'intermediate' in terms of contaminants between levels off north Somerset and off north Cornwall. The crustacean species of mantis shrimp *Rissoides desmaresti* (which was not recorded during the only previous survey of crustacea around Lundy, see Atkinson & Schembri, 1981), and mud crab *Goneplax rhomboides* were two of the larger species to be found.

Regulation of fishing activities within the SAC

The Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (D&SIFCA), in association with the Marine Management Organisation, described a 'risk priority matrix' relating to how different fishing activities may affect the features and sub-features of all European Marine Sites (which includes the Lundy Special Area of Conservation or SAC) and the level of risk/exposure associated with these. Thus the towing of mobile gear along the seabed (a high or 'red' risk) has been deemed incompatible with protection of the reef feature at Lundy and will not be allowed to take place where reefs are present within the SAC. Amber and green levels of risk mean that, with management measures in place, the activity or gear type (such as potting) can continue to be used in conjunction with that feature. Sarah Clark, Senior Environmental Fisheries Officer with the D&SIFCA, explained to the Group that a suite of flexible 'permitting byelaws' would be introduced, following public consultation, by the end of 2015. Red risk fishing activities needed to have their permitting byelaws in place by the end of 2013. A requirement under any permitting byelaw would be that all fishing boats would require a permit specific to the type of fishing activity it undertook. Another change to fishing practices will be the introduction of a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) on all inshore boats using towed gear, which will allow their positions to be continuously tracked.

Lobster tagging study

The D&SIFCA lobster tagging work, which was initiated in 2008, continued in 2013. A further 200 lobsters were tagged in June (with 23 re-captures) and 430 lobsters were tagged in July (with 73 re-captures). One of the recaptures in July was of a lobster that had been tagged during the first round of tagging in 2008. It was reassuring to know that the tags were remaining in place. Plankton samples have also been taken, though very few lobster larvae have been caught in these. D&SIFCA have recently employed an assistant to the conservation officer who will be able to analyse the data over this coming winter.

The VALMER project

VALMER is a joint Anglo/French project funded by the European Regional Development Fund covering the Western Approaches to the English Channel/La Manche. The project focuses on six case study sites (one of which is North Devon and includes Lundy) at which the techniques and methods of ecosystem services assessment and their application will be tested with a cross-section of local stakeholders. The project began in September 2012 and continues until June 2015. Working alongside key stakeholders, VALMER aims to provide policy-makers with a clearer understanding of the values that can be placed on the marine environment, and how these can be used to make more effective management decisions. The Advisory Group Chairman (Dr Keith Hiscock) and Secretary (Robert Irving) have been invited to be involved with one of the project's working groups.

The Atlantic Array windfarm proposal

This proposal continued to be discussed at both meetings, with the Group being brought up to date on the most recent developments by Derek Green, the island's Manager.

If there are any matters which LFS members would wish to have aired at the Advisory Group meetings, I would be happy to raise them on your behalf.

ROBERT IRVING
Honorary Secretary
Lundy Marine Conservation Zone Advisory Group
April 2014

Reference

Atkinson, R.J.A. & Schembri, P.J. 1981. The marine fauna of Lundy: Crustacea (Euphausiacea and Decapoda). *Report of the Lundy Field Society* 31, 35-51.