

# REPORT OF THE LUNDY MARINE PROTECTED AREA ADVISORY GROUP

The Lundy Marine Protected Area Advisory Group (LMPAAG) 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, local nature conservation groups, Torrington District Council, commercial fishing interests, dive charter boat skippers and local dive clubs. The Group meets twice a year: in 2014 it met on 2 April on board the MS *Oldenburg* alongside Bideford Quay, and on 14 October at the Ilfracombe and North Devon Sub-Aqua Club, Ilfracombe. The LFS provides the secretariat for the LMPAAG.

At the meeting in April, short presentations were given by Ruth Porter (Natural England) on the various designations which cover Lundy's waters; Sarah Clark (Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority) on the new permitting byelaws affecting mobile gear, potting and diving; Peta Knott (Wessex Archaeology) on the *Iona II* protected wreck; and Keith Hiscock (Group Chairman) on the ecology of the spiny lobster.

A variety of issues were brought to the attention of the Group and discussed during the two meetings held in 2014. These are summarised below:

## **Name change**

In April 2014 it was proposed that the Group's name be changed from the Lundy Marine Conservation Zone Advisory Group to the Lundy Marine Protected Area Advisory Group. Whilst this change may appear to the layperson to be rather pedantic, there is actually good reason for it. The term Marine Protected Area is a generic term and can be used to acknowledge any number of conservation designations which may be bestowed upon an area of sea and/or shore. Lundy has several such designations: Marine Nature Reserve; Special Area of Conservation; Site of Special Scientific Interest (which extends down to low water mark); No Take Zone; and, most recently, Marine Conservation Zone.<sup>1</sup> The new name of the Group therefore encompasses all of these designations, and was formally accepted and recognised by the island's Management Forum in on 3 April 2014.

## **New fisheries byelaws**

Following on the development of a 'risk priority matrix' for the Lundy SAC (as mentioned in this report last year), the Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (D&SIFCA) have subsequently drawn up three new byelaws relating to fishing activities within the SAC. Each of these is being termed a 'permitting' byelaw: management measures are contained in the permit conditions, so they can be changed far more readily than is the case with the 'traditional' byelaws they are replacing. Permit schemes help the Authority understand the level of catching across both commercial and leisure activities by requiring permit holders to provide catch data as a condition of use of the permit.

<sup>1</sup> Note that the book by Hiscock & Irving (2012), *Protecting Lundy's marine life: 40 years of science and conservation*, details all of these designations and the various name changes of the Advisory Group. The book is available through the LFS website ([www.lundy.org.uk/publications](http://www.lundy.org.uk/publications)).

The most damaging fishing activity relating to the specified feature of the SAC ('reefs') is mobile gear towed across the seabed. Consequently, a byelaw preventing the use of Demersal Mobile Gear on the reef feature of the SAC (and for a 50-metre buffer around the extent of the reef feature) was introduced on 1 January 2014. During 2014, two further permitting byelaws were put out to public consultation. These covered potting on the reef feature (to include the taking of crab, lobster, prawns, cuttlefish, whelks, finfish etc); and diving on the reef feature (relating to the taking of crab, lobster or scallops). A maximum catch limit per permit-holding 'leisure' diver is being proposed of two lobsters, three (brown) crabs and 15 scallops. Note, however, that in the spirit of the Marine Nature Reserve several of the charter boat skippers will not allow their divers to bring shellfish on board.

### **The new Grey Seal Code of Conduct**

At the start of the year, a new 'Seal Code of Conduct' was issued by the island's Warden, Beccy McDonald. The main target audience was visiting boats that were approaching too close to hauled-out seals and disturbing them unnecessarily; and also divers encouraging seals to play with them whilst under water. The Code recommended that boats do not approach closer than 50 metres to rocks where seals were hauled out. However, this meant that several dive sites (most notably the Knoll Pins) may become 'off limits' simply because there were seals resting on the emergent rocks. After hearing the views of several dive skippers, it was decided that the Code could be altered. It was agreed that a maximum speed of five knots be set for all craft within 100 metres of the coast/emergent rocks, around the whole of the island. Interestingly, the island's Grey Seals are now proving to be more of a draw for visiting divers than the colourful marine life.

### **A new dive trail for the *Iona II* protected wreck**

Acknowledging an increasing interest in the country's protected shipwrecks, Historic England have decided to nurture this interest by enhancing the visitor experience at some of its protected wrecks. The wreck of the *Iona II* paddle steamer, which sank off Lundy's east coast in 1864 and whose location remained unknown until 1976, is one of their chosen sites for greater interpretation. Four booklets have now been produced about different aspects of the wreck, together with a number of dive trail cards which can be taken under water by divers licensed to visit the wreck. Divers are also being encouraged to take photographs from set viewpoints around the wreck to assist with monitoring. Further information on this project is available at: [www.landmarktrust.org.uk/lundyisland/discovering-lundy/activities/diving/divesites/iona-ii-dive-trail](http://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/lundyisland/discovering-lundy/activities/diving/divesites/iona-ii-dive-trail).

### **Work undertaken by Natural England: subtidal and intertidal monitoring; a Site Improvement Plan; a Conservation Advice Package; and a Management Plan**

At the Group's October meeting, we were told of various activities that Natural England is currently undertaking. The subtidal reefs are due to have their condition assessment reported on in 2015, as part of the legal requirement of the Habitats Directive. In order to inform this assessment, a number of monitoring tasks were carried out by the Plymouth Marine Laboratory during the summer of 2014, which included looking at sessile epifaunal communities both inside and outside the No Take Zone. This work is due to be reported on by April 2015. Monitoring of intertidal areas was also completed this summer, trialling a new recording protocol along five transects located on various shores around the island. This rapid assessment method will complement the intertidal biotope surveys which are carried out every six years to inform the condition of rocky shore communities. The Site Improvement Plan for Lundy looks at the threats and impacts affecting the SAC, the measures and actions that can be used to address them, and how much this will cost. Similar plans are being drawn up by Natural England for all of their

Natura 2000 sites. A (marine) Conservation Advice Package is currently being revised for the SAC and the MCZ, with an intended completion date of summer 2015. The marine section of the island's Management Plan will be finalised once the Conservation Advice Package for the SAC and MCZ has been completed.

### **The Atlantic Array windfarm proposal**

At the end of November 2013 (and after completion of last year's LFS report), an open letter was issued by the developer of the proposed Atlantic Array windfarm, RWE Npower Renewables Ltd. This included the sentence: "Due to the technical challenges specific to the zone, coupled with the current market conditions, it is uneconomic for RWE to continue with the Atlantic Array development." The Advisory Group had been monitoring the progress of the proposal closely and this letter came as a complete surprise to many. However, the viability of the project will be reconsidered in 2020, so it has not gone away entirely.

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 Protected Area Advisory Group  
April 2015