



**Title of Meeting:** Skomer Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 8 April 2014

**Venue:** Marloes Village Hall

<b>Present:</b>	Mr J. Arnold	West Wales Shellfisherman's Association
	Mr B. Bullimore	Independent
	Mr F. Bunker	Marine Conservation Society
	Mr M. Burton	Natural Resources Wales
	Mrs S. Burton	Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation
	Dr R. Crump	CHAIRMAN
	Mrs Y. Evans	Marloes & St. Brides Community Council
	Miss J. Hodges MBE	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
	Mr I. Johnson	Old Mill Diving Services
	Mr B. Jones	British Sub-Aqua Club
	Mrs J. Jones	Natural Resources Wales
	Ms K. Lock	Natural Resources Wales
	Mr D. McDonough	Welsh Yachting Association
	Mrs C. Millican	Pembrokeshire Field Study Council centres
	Mr P. Newman	Natural Resources Wales
	Mr J. O'Connor	Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers
	Mr J. Reynolds	Dale Sailing
	Mt T. Theobald	Pembrokeshire County Council
	Mr M. Thompson	National Trust
	Miss L. Wilberforce	Wildlife Trust South & West Wales
	Mrs A. Winterton	Natural Resources Wales

**Apologies:** Mr I. Ball (Wales Environment Link), Mrs A. Bunker (NRW), Mr D. Bell (WASAC), Mrs G. Bell (Marine Conservation Society), Mr M. Camplin (NRW), Mr N. Davies (SWWSFC), Mr J. Evans (WFA), Mrs T. Forsyth (Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum), Cllr H. George (PCC), Mr D. Kennard (WASAC), Mr P. Marshall (WG Marine Enforcement), Mr D. Miller MBE (Maritime and Coastguard Agency), Dr R. Perkins (Cardiff University), Ms C. Price (RYA), Mr P. Renfro (Pembrokeshire Marine Code), Mr E. Roberts (NRW), Mr P. Smithies (Marloes & St. Brides Community Council), Mr A. Tuddenham (National Trust), Dr J. Turner (Bangor University), Mrs M. Youell (NRW), Skomer Island Wardens (WTSWW).

## 1. Welcome and introductions

The Chairman welcomed members, especially those new to the Committee.

## **2. Minutes from the 2013 meeting and matters arising**

The chairman reported that he had met with Dr E. Roberts (Chief Executive of NRW) and Mr G. Hillier (Executive Director for Operations South, NRW) at Martins Haven on 26th April. He had received assurances that although NRW valued the work of the MNR, they were unable to make any commitment to its future at that time. The Chairman had extended an invitation to Dr Roberts to attend the Advisory Committee, but he was unavailable. However, he was willing to come to the next meeting.

Mr B. Bullimore asked if a presentation had been made to Welsh Government as suggested in Section 4 of the minutes. Mr P. Newman replied that an offer had been made, but that it had not been taken up by Welsh Government.

Mr B. Bullimore also asked whether CCW Director's Team's supportive comments had been included in the Legacy report from them to NRW. Mrs A. Winterton confirmed that Skomer MNR had been included in the report.

Mrs Y. Evans and Cllr. P. Smithies had communicated the advisory committee's concerns for the future of the staff at Skomer MNR to Marloes and St Brides community council and the community council would be representing those concerns to Welsh Government, possible via the Advisory Committee Chairman.

The minutes of the 24<sup>th</sup> meeting were signed off as a true record.

## **3. Annual Report for 2013/14 – brief presentation of the MNR's year**

Mr P. Newman gave an illustrated summary of the main events of the 2013/14 season. Notable events included the volunteer diver survey, collaborative work with new NRW colleagues on mapping of eelgrass, joint ventures with academic institutions, incidents involving Skomer MNR equipment and staff (in positive and negative ways!) and impacts from the winter storms.

## **4. Monitoring update - illustrated presentation of the MNR's work**

Mr M. Burton and Ms K. Lock gave a presentation on the monitoring results from the 2013/14 season. These results are included in summary in the Annual Report and more fully in the 2013 Skomer MNR Project Status Report.

Mr F. Bunker said he would be interested to see whether there were any effects from the winter storms, in particular the effect of suspended sediments in the water column reducing light availability and the possible knock on effect to plankton production. He also suggested searching the North Middleholm area for possible *Alcyonium glomeratum* (red sea fingers) colonies. The chairman said it would also be interesting to see if the winter storms had affected the intertidal communities.

Mrs S. Burton proposed that a 'Marine Seminar', similar to the recent Pembrokeshire

Islands Bird conference in Cardiff, could be organised as a Welsh Government event to promote marine monitoring in Wales, and linking it to a Marine Protected Areas (MPA) event.

Miss J. Hodges was very concerned that the need for long-term monitoring was not mentioned in the Welsh Government update on Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) in Wales. She reported that the bird conference had heard a great deal about the importance of long-term data, including that of the MNR and she congratulated the MNR team on the amount of work that they consistently achieve. She added that JNCC's use of Skomer data to inform their work on monitoring for Marine Strategy Framework Directive compliance was testament to the quality of the work produced by the MNR.

At this point a refreshment break was called to allow members to read through Welsh Government's briefing note on the transition of Skomer from MNR to MCZ.

## **5. Update on the Marine Conservation Zone Project in Wales**

Mr P. Newman provided an update on Welsh Government's approach to MCZs. He reported that the previous 10 sites were no longer being considered, neither were highly protected MCZs. Instead Welsh Government would be carrying out a review of all MPA's in Wales and looking for gaps in coverage of features.

The Skomer MNR will automatically become a MCZ and will eventually have a new designating order and new conservation objectives. It is proposed that the initial transition will happen this year, but no dates have been decided. To start with the MNR will change to a MCZ with an automatic transfer of the current byelaws. After that there will be a programme of work to establish and agree new objectives and features. These will be hugely important to the future management of the Skomer MCZ. The Welsh Government has had initial engagement with NRW to look at the objectives, but it is very early days and it is still not clear who will be responsible for managing the site.

Mrs A. Winterton said that for now NRW would continue with the current management regime and the complement of MNR permanent staff.

Mr B. Bullimore said that the Welsh Government's briefing note was very ambiguous. He reasoned that if Welsh Government intended NRW to maintain the "existing management regime" they needed to make it explicit or NRW could withdraw funding. Mr P Newman clarified that for MNRs under the Wildlife and Countryside Act management was the clear responsibility of the conservation agencies, whereas the Marine and Coastal Access Act does not assign any overall management role to any organisation. Miss J. Hodges suggested that the 'duties of public bodies' needed to be made clearer as currently it gave no responsibility for day to day management of MCZs.

Mr B. Bullimore was very worried that the review of features and conservation objectives

would go down the same route as at Lundy where the result was a MCZ designated only for crawfish.

Mr P. Newman said that Ms Louise George, the author of the WG briefing note, was willing to take questions on it. He suggested that committee members could send him their questions, comments and opinions and these be collated for the Chairman to send together.

**ACTION: ALL**

The chairman wanted reassurance that the Advisory Committee would be maintained for the Skomer MCZ so that all representatives can continue to have a voice. This has been a major achievement for the Skomer MNR and it was essential that it should continue.

## **6. Any other business**

Mr B. Bullimore mentioned that the all-Wales MPA steering committee had been due to meet in March. However it had not gone ahead as many organisations did not have representatives to attend. The committee is meant to be made up of senior officers from organisations including WG, NRW, Welsh Water, National Park Authority, Crown Estate and European site officers. The committee is undertaking a review of Welsh MPAs, but there was a lack of detail available on what that would entail. He added that the committee was also supposed to meet annually with the chairs of the various Relevant Authority Groups and of the Skomer MNR Advisory Committee, but was not aware that it had done so.

Mrs C. Millican informed the group that the Dale Fort Marine Symposium will be taking part on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2014 and that everyone was welcome.

Mr T. Theobald said that the Pembrokeshire Biodiversity Partnership invasive species action plan will soon be out.

Mrs A. Winterton reminded all that the Special Protected Areas (SPA) consultation will be finishing on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

Miss J. Hodges thanked the Dale WI for the hospitality and cakes.

## **7. Date of next meeting**

To be decided – Mr P Newman will send out date possibly either Tuesday 14th or Thursday 16th April 2015 at 2.00 pm at Marloes Village Hall.