



**Title of Meeting:** Skomer Marine Conservation Zone Advisory Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 21 April 2015

**Venue:** Marloes Village Hall

<b>Present:</b>	Mr J Arnold	West Wales Shellfisherman's Association
	Mrs L Beal	Marloes & St. Brides Community Council
	Ms G Bell	Marine Conservation Society
	Mr B Bullimore	Independent
	Mr M Burton	Natural Resources Wales
	Mrs S Burton	Pembrokeshire Marine SAC
	Dr R Crump	CHAIRMAN
	Ms C Gjerlov	Natural Resources Wales
	Miss J Hodges MBE	Independent
	Mr C Jessop	Marloes & St. Brides Community Council
	Mr I Johnson	Old Mill Diving Services
	Mr B Jones	British Sub-Aqua Club
	Mr D Jones	Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum/ NARC
	Ms K Lock	Natural Resources Wales
	Mrs S Mellor	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
	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
	Mr T Theobald	Pembrokeshire County Council
	Mr A Tuddenham	National Trust
	Miss L Wilberforce	Wildlife Trust South & West Wales
	Mrs A Winterton	Natural Resources Wales

**Apologies:** Mr I Ball (Wales Environment Link), Ms E Barton (Royal Yachting Association), Mr D Bell (WASAC), Mrs A Bunker (NRW), Mr F Bunker (Marine Conservation Society), Mr J Evans (Welsh Fishermen's Association), Mrs Y Evans (Marloes & St. Brides Community Council), Mr R Furneaux (Maritime and Coastguard Agency), Cllr H George (Pembrokeshire County Council), Mrs S Kessel (Wildlife Trust South & West Wales), Mr P Marshall (Welsh Government Fisheries), Mr A Middleton (NRW board), Skomer Island Wardens (WTSWW), Mr J Turner (Bangor University).

## 1. Welcome and introductions

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

## 2. Minutes from the 2014 meeting and matters arising

Mr B Bullimore asked whether the proposed 'Marine Seminar' to promote marine monitoring in Wales to Welsh Government, suggested last year by Mrs S Burton, had been organised. The event had not and it was suggested that this should be pursued in 2015 and that Dale Fort could be a suitable venue to host the seminar.

**ACTION: Skomer MCZ staff, Mrs S Burton, Mr B Bullimore, Mrs C Millican**

The minutes of the 25<sup>th</sup> meeting were signed off as true record.

## 3. Annual Report for 2014/15– brief presentation of the MCZ's year

Mr P. Newman gave an illustrated summary of the main events of the 2013/14 season. One main event was the transition of the Marine Nature Reserve to a Marine Conservation Zone on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

Other notable events included the volunteer diver survey, collaborative work with new NRW colleagues on mapping of eelgrass, joint ventures with academic institutions and impacts from the winter storms.

The issue of high numbers of abandoned/unmarked fishing pots and lost pots in the MCZ was discussed. MCZ staff reported abandoned and unmarked gear to Welsh Government fisheries, but there had been only a limited response. Mr B Bullimore reported that 28 lost pots were retrieved by Neptune's Army of Rubbish Collectors (NARC) in the MCZ during 2014, and these were all unmarked gear. Mr J Arnold said that it was WG Fisheries' responsibility to deal with unmarked or abandoned gear. Ms G Bell suggested that the pots could be individually tagged to make it easier to ascertain ownership. This could be trialled at Skomer MCZ as an example of best practice. Tagging methods for pots would need to be researched. Mrs S Burton reported that currently Pembrokeshire Marine SAC and WG Fisheries were discussing the use of biodegradable hooks for fishing pots and it could be that tagging individual pots could also be discussed. However it was stressed that any mechanism that cost fishermen time must be carefully considered.

**ACTION: Advisory Committee to write to WG Fisheries stressing concerns about abandoned and lost gear in the MCZ and to clarify what action can be taken to remove them.**

New editions of the general booklet and the seal watching booklets with NRW style have been produced. The print quality for the general booklet was disappointing and the printers were to be asked to do a re-run to allow the images to be at the expected high standards.

#### **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 2014/15 season. These results are included in summary in the Annual Report and more fully in the 2014/15 Skomer MCZ Project Status Report.

Mr B Bullimore asked what proportion of SAC monitoring was completed by the Skomer MCZ programme. Ms C Gjerlov responded that although not sure of the percentage, it was an incredibly valuable contribution to SAC monitoring, in particular Pembrokeshire Marine SAC. Mr B Bullimore took the opportunity to thank the Skomer MCZ team for the contributions to Milford Haven Waterway Environmental Surveillance Group (MHESG) work during 2014. Miss J Hodges stressed that the contribution the team make to SAC work should not be under-estimated.

Ms G Bell voiced concerns about resources being cut as a result of NRW's review of monitoring and the impacts this would have on the Skomer MCZ monitoring programme and ability to contribute to wider SAC monitoring work. She stressed that as an Advisory Committee we need to make sure that the monitoring work is not reduced. The chairman agreed and it was proposed to put this in writing to NRW senior managers and Welsh Government.

**ACTION: Chairman**

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

Mr P. Newman provided an update on Welsh Government's approach to MCZs:

On the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2014 Skomer Marine Nature Reserve became Skomer Marine Conservation Zone.

This is an automatic change brought about by commencement of provisions in the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. Skomer will be the first Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) in Wales and the Welsh Government has made a commitment to ensuring there is no fall in the level of protection afforded to the area as a result of this change.

Also, Natural Resources Wales is committed, for the time being, to continuing with the local management arrangements at Skomer. Longer term, however, management arrangements at Skomer will be considered as part of the Wales wide review of Marine Protected Area (MPA) management arrangements being undertaken by the Wales MPA Management Steering Group.

Over the next 12-18 months, in line with the Marine Act's provisions for MCZs, the Welsh Government intends to establish features and conservation objectives for Skomer. During 2014 Mr P Newman, together with other NRW colleagues, met with Welsh Government officials to begin discussions on changes to features and conservation

objectives. This work has been suspended due to other priorities dominating the work programme of the Welsh Government department involved, but is expected to resume later in 2015.

Mr P Newman has continued to work with NRW colleagues to provide information on Skomer MCZ to the NRW Marine Programme Board and the joint Welsh Government/NRW Marine Protected Area Management Steering Group.

Mr B Bullimore warned that the Committee needed to be proactive in ensuring a positive outcome to the discussions on management objectives and features, especially as WG have emphasized that they wish to see no fall in protection for Skomer MCZ, but make no mention of any potential increase in protection at the site.

Ms G Bell agreed and said that all the features of the Skomer MNR should be included in the feature list for Skomer MCZ and not follow the example of Lundy, where its features were reduced to just one – the crawfish.

Mr B Bullimore added that he had not been encouraged by the recent paper from the MPA Management Steering Group in which Skomer MCZ was identified in the opening pages of the document, but thereafter the document concentrated exclusively on the management of European Marine Sites. He told members that management of Skomer MCZ was scarcely taken into account and not mentioned at all in any of the management options. He found it difficult to see where Skomer MCZ fitted within the options given and still more difficult to see where the Advisory Committee would have a role (an Advisory “Group” was mentioned but not identified as the Skomer MCZ advisory committee). He went on to say that the implication of the recent Skomer MNR transition to an MCZ was not explored in the paper: As an MNR, CCW/ NRW had full management responsibility, whereas the MCZ provisions of the 2009 Marine & Coastal Access Act do not assign lead responsibility for management to any single organisation, but simply requires any public authority to “exercise its functions in the manner which the authority considers best furthers the conservation objectives”; a considerably more nebulous management regime than for EMS management which at least identifies relevant authorities. He considered that whilst the future management of the MCZ and its contribution to the MPA network should, naturally, be included in the strategic delivery of MPA management, the MNR / MCZ’s historical management and objectives must be acknowledged and maintained, and the degree of protection, management and monitoring not weakened. The management review needed to recognise that the management of the MCZ combines the planning and overview functions considered in the management option paper with practical day-to-day management and monitoring, i.e. management implementation. He added that Alison Hargrave who had been tasked to compile all responses to the management options consultation, would welcome a response from the Advisory Committee.

Mr B Bullimore went on to say that the very long (40 year) experience and knowledge of the Advisory Committee must be recognised and maintained; the prospect of the Advisory Committee being directed in its role, or disenfranchised by a remote regional group or organisation without the Committee's historical or breadth of experience and expertise or local knowledge and perspective would be unacceptable and a retrograde step. Although an all-Wales strategic MPA management steering group could be valuable, an over-simplified regional management structure working under that group would be inappropriate for the successful management of the MCZ.

The Chairman agreed that it would be a good idea for the Committee to respond collectively in addition to any individual members' responses.

#### **ACTION – Chairman**

#### **6. New Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protected Areas proposals**

Mrs A Winterton provided an update on the designation of new areas: NRW had been tasked by Welsh Government with the designations of new SAC's and SPA's in Wales. This has come about because Europe insists that UK authorities include the full suite of species covered by European conservation directives. Two designations are being proposed: Harbour porpoise SAC's (3 in Welsh waters) and Manx shearwater/puffin feeding SPA's (4 in Welsh waters). The proposed areas are very large for these sites and there is currently an informal consultation to consider the boundaries of the sites. Formal consultation is proposed for summer 2015 with a challenging target to have candidate site proposals to Europe by the end of 2015.

There were some concerns by the Advisory Committee that any effects of the new sites on marine users should be made clear and that effective management of the sites should be considered during the consultation.

#### **7. Any other business**

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

Mr C Jessop suggested that the presentations given at the meeting should be combined and distributed to Assembly Members in a stand-alone format with voice-over. He felt this would be a powerful way to demonstrate the impressive work of the Skomer MCZ.

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

To be decided – either Thursday 14th or Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2015 at 2.00 pm at Marloes Village Hall.