



Title of Meeting: Skomer Marine Conservation Zone Advisory Committee

Date of Meeting: 19 April 2016 **Venue:** Marloes Village Hall

Present:	Mr J Arnold	West Wales Shellfisherman's Association
	Ms G Bell	Marine Conservation Society
	Mr B Bullimore	Independent
	Mr F Bunker	Local Marine Conservation Society
	Mr M Burton	Natural Resources Wales
	Mrs S Burton	Pembrokeshire Marine SAC
	Dr R Crump	CHAIRMAN
	Mrs Y Evans	Marloes & St. Brides Community Council
	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
	Mrs J Jones	Natural Resources Wales
	Mr D Kennard	Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum/ NARC
	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 T Theobald	Pembrokeshire County Council
	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 (British Sub-Aqua Club), Mrs A Bunker (NRW), Mr J Evans (Welsh Fishermen's Association), Mr R Furneaux (Maritime and Coastguard Agency), Ms C Gjerlov (NRW), Mr D Jones (Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum), Cllr H George (Pembrokeshire County Council), Ms L George (Welsh Government), Mr P Marshall (Welsh Government Fisheries), Mr D Love (RNLI), Ms S Mellor (Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority), Dr R Perkins (Cardiff University), Mr J Reynolds (Dale Sailing Company), Skomer Island Wardens (WTSWW), Mr P Smithies (Marloes & St Brides CC), Mr G Thompson (Crown Estate), Mr A Tuddenham (National Trust), Dr J Turner (Bangor University).

1. Welcome and introductions

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

2. Minutes from the 2015 meeting and matters arising

Marine Seminar event to promote marine monitoring in Wales to Welsh Government (WG) – this did not take place in 2015. Dale Fort will be hosting a Marine Symposium and there could be opportunity to use this as a platform.

Mr P Newman had a meeting with Mr B John from the Milford office of Welsh Government Fisheries. It was a very useful meeting and there is now a strategy in place for dealing with lost gear. Also see “Sustainable fisheries project” item 5 on agenda. Ms G Bell commented that the MCS Beachwatch surveys have shown that 15-20% of beach litter is from fishing. Mr C Jessop suggested that people could take photos of fishing litter and specifically of lost fishing pots from local beaches. Ms G Bell agreed that this would be useful data for MCS.

Chairman had written letters to NRW and WG to express concerns over the future funding of long term monitoring at Skomer MCZ. There has been no reply yet from WG. NRW has replied but the letter was very non-committal and he read it as a “holding response” while NRW conducted its internal business reviews. He was worried by paragraph 5 which stated [“With the introduction of the Marine and Coastal Access Act and the transition to a MCZ however, our statutory responsibilities to undertake these activities \[managing and monitoring the MCZ\] have now ceased.”](#) The chairman asked Mr P Newman to investigate whether or not it was the case that NRW had a responsibility for managing and monitoring MCZs?

Action: Mr P Newman

Mrs A Winterton gave an update on the current state of business area reviews in NRW which are still underway but the financial background of 30-40% cuts still dominates the way NRW will operate in the future. Until these reviews are completed it is not possible for NRW to guarantee future funding for the Skomer MCZ, although there is a statutory requirement to continue monitoring for the SAC’s and Water Framework Directive. WG has a duty to monitor MCZ’s but they have to delegate it to NRW or an alternative organisation. The Chairman confirmed that NRW had agreed funding for the Skomer MCZ for the 2016/17 season.

Mr B Bullimore stated that neither WG nor NRW are addressing the issue of MCZ’s in Wales and this uncertainty was unsatisfactory. He added that this uncertainty extended to the future of the Advisory Committee. Ms G Bell and Mr T Theobald suggested an effective way for the committee to raise concerns about the future of Skomer MCZ was to approach the new environment minister directly, this would be best done once the new minister is announced following the imminent elections.

Action: Chair

Mr C Jessop asked if the idea of producing a DVD of the MCZ presentations was completed. Ms K Lock and Mr B Burton had produced a 3minute video presentation based on a summary of the annual report and project status report. It worked well, but the file

size made it unmanageable to promote through the NRW website. Other avenues of promoting the Skomer MCZ through the website and other electronic platforms are being pursued.

Committee to respond collectively to the MPA Management Steering Group – Done

The minutes of the 26th meeting were signed off as true record.

3. Annual Report for 2015/16– brief presentation of the MCZ’s year

Mr P. Newman gave an illustrated summary of the main events of the 2015/16 season.

Mr B Bullimore questioned the role of volunteers in the NRW business area review. Approximately a fifth of staff time is provided by volunteers in the Skomer MCZ and restricting their role would have serious implications to the work programme.

Mr B Bullimore found it interesting that Skomer MCZ and its work was being identified by UK organisations but still continues to off the WG radar. Mr P Newman agreed that Skomer MCZ appeared to have a high profile in academic circles. Mr B Bullimore said that the Skomer MCZ profile needed to be raised in WG, the recent omission of the Skomer long-term scallop data from the WG scallop consultation for Cardigan Bay highlighted the ignorance to the monitoring work being carried out here. Mr C Jessop and Mrs Y Chamberlain suggested that the Marloes and St Brides community council could write a letter to WG to help lobby to raise the profile of the Skomer MCZ and its importance to the local community.

Mrs S Burton said that there would be a Pembrokeshire Marine SAC RAG meeting at the end of May that WG officials have agreed to attend. She suggested that a synopsis of the work conducted at Skomer MCZ could be added as an agenda item

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 2015/16 season. These results included a worrying 40% drop in eelgrass coverage in North Haven between 2014 & 2015, this is under investigation. Work has been carried out with Portsmouth University on sponge genetics and they have also been looking at the microorganisms in diseased Boring sponge with interesting results. The long term seal monitoring data from Marloes Peninsula and Skomer sites has been statistically analysed by Swansea University and a scientific paper is to be produced. A joint Swansea University/NRW PhD student is looking at seal movements in the Irish sea and interactions with marine renewables. The research has started looking at historic seal pup tagging records from the Skomer area from 1958 to 1972, for which Skomer MCZ staff were grateful to Malcolm Cullen for making them available.

The Chairman commented that the presentation illustrated the importance of long-term

monitoring data and Mr B Bullimore added that it also demonstrated the folly of just monitoring single features, when a wide and varied programme was far more sensitive to change.

Ms G Bell urged MCZ staff to submit cetacean data via the Harbour porpoise SAC consultation.

5. Pembrokeshire Sustainable Shellfish Initiative project

Mrs S Burton gave a presentation on this joint initiative between WWSFA, Pembrokeshire Marine SAC and Neptune's Army of Rubbish Collectors (NARC). The aims of the projects are to promote and test ideas to make fishing more sustainable. These include gear tagging, ghost fishing, testing degradable hook closure methods and the use of escape hatches. 21 fishermen have signed up to take part in the project. The Skomer MCZ have agreed to help with an experiment that will test the longevity of different materials/weak links used to close the escape hatches in pots.

6. Any other business

Mrs C Millican announced 2 events to run at Dale Fort FSC: Capturing the Coast training event, 23rd May 2016 and the Marine Symposium, 21st May 2016.

Ms G Bell urged people to use the window of opportunity around the coming Assembly elections to write to the prospective AM's about marine issues and to write to the new environment minister once they are elected.

Mr P Newman informed the committee that the barn would no longer be available for storage of MCZ equipment from May 2017, and asked if people could inform him of any possible options in the area. Mrs Y Chamberlain suggested advertising in the Peninsula Papers.

The Chairman thanked the Dale WI for the hospitality and cakes.

7. Date of next meeting

To be decided