

**SKOMER MARINE NATURE RESERVE**  
**ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES OF 15TH MEETING, WEDNESDAY 27<sup>th</sup> April 2004**  
**HELD AT MARLOES VILLAGE HALL**

**P R E S E N T**

Mr J Archer Thomson	Dale Fort Field Centre
Mr B Bullimore	Countryside Council for Wales
Mr F Bunker	Marine Conservation Society
Mr M Burton	Countryside Council for Wales
Mr M Camplin	Countryside Council for Wales
Mr D Chant	South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee
Mr P Coates	South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee
Dr R Crump	CHAIRMAN
Mrs Y Evans	Marloes & St. Brides Community Council
Mr D Gardner	South and West Wales Fishing Communities & Pisces Environmental & Fisheries Business Consultancy
Mr R Grisbrook	Environment Agency
Dr M Havard	Wildlife Trust - South & West Wales
Miss J Hodges MBE	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
Mr I Johnson	Old Mill Diving Services
Mrs A Love	West Wales Divers
Mr D Love	RNLI
Dr L Luddington	Countryside Council for Wales
Mr P Marshal	DEFRA
Ms A McConnell	Countryside Council for Wales
Mr D McDonough	Welsh Yachting Association
Ms C Millican	Orielton Field Centre
Dr S Morris	Pembrokeshire College
Mr P Newman	Countryside Council for Wales
Dr D Parker	Countryside Council for Wales
Mr L Richardson	South West Sea Fisheries Committee
Mr P Smithies	Marloes & St. Brides Community Council
Mr T Theobald	Pembrokeshire County Council
Mr C Trundel	South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee
Mr J Warneford	Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum, activity liaison officer

Apologies were received from:

Cllr B Morgan (Marloes & St. Brides Community Council), Ms S Tomson (RYA), Ms S Bailey (World Wide Fund for Nature), Mr J Brown (Wildlife Trust South & West Wales), Ms C Heeps (Crown Estate), Dr C Wooldridge (Department of Maritime Studies and International Transport, Cardiff), Mr P Crocombe (WASAC), Mr. P. Morris (MCA) now retired replacement being sought, Mr J Orchard (Pembrokeshire Canoeists), Mr B Jones (British Sub-Aqua Club), Mr J Deason (Pembrokeshire County Council), Mr M Kaiser (School of Ocean Sciences, Bangor), Mr D Worrall (CCW) & Mr R Thomas (CCW).

Absent were:

Prof. L M Warren (Department of Law, Aberystwyth), Mr B Deas (National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations), Mr C Doyle (Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers), Mr J Reynolds (Dale Sailing Company), Mr R Ellis (National Trust) & Ms B Emmett (Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Bangor).

## **1 MINUTES OF FOURTEENTH MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**

The Chairman welcomed members. Dr P Lloyd of the Royal Yachting Association has now retired from the committee and has been replaced by Ms S Tomson. The chairman suggested a letter be sent to Dr Lloyd thanking him for his years of service to the advisory committee.

**Action PN**

The Chairman took members through the minutes of the last meeting and these were accepted as a true record with one modification. Mr P Coates asked for the minutes to clearly state that only part of Lundy MNR had been declared a No Take Zone (NTZ).

Actions from the previous meeting:

Mr B Bullimore confirmed that a press release was issued which appeared as 2 separate articles in the Western Telegraph.

Mr P Newman confirmed a holding statement was produced to deal with any enquiries about a NTZ at Skomer MNR.

Mr P Newman confirmed the R.I.B. *Skalmey II* had passed the MCA workboat code and was now licensed to carry 6 people.

Mr P Newman confirmed that the reprint of the Skomer booklet had been ordered. The copies had not yet arrived so he was unable to confirm if the corrections had been done or not. (Note; since the meeting the booklets have been delivered to the MNR office and the corrections have been done.)

## **2. NO TAKE ZONE PROGRESS**

Mr P Coates summarised the progress the SWSFC had made in investigating the possibility of a NTZ at Skomer MNR:

The item had been taken to the SWSFC who were receptive to the idea in principle and thought a byelaw would be possible. Concerns had been expressed over the costs and resources needed to implement any byelaw and enforce it. The use of MNR staff in this role was discussed. For a byelaw to be accepted by the Committee (and eventually by the Welsh Assembly Government) it would have to have a minimum number of objections and any restrictions would need to be justifiable. Studies would have to be done into the level and type of activities in the area, in particular the angling and charter boat activity in the eastern side of the Reserve.

Mr P Newman summarised the progress Skomer MNR had made in investigating the possibility of a NTZ at Skomer MNR:

An MSc / undergraduate student, J Hasthorpe, of Cardiff University had completed a study including the feasibility of a NTZ at Skomer MNR. His report is not yet finalised but a draft copy had been received. Eighty commercial fishermen had been contacted in the area from Fishguard to Tenby and 46 replies received. Of these, 28% perceived no benefit whatsoever from a NTZ; the rest were either unsure or saw some benefit (a full breakdown of the figures were not available at the time of the meeting). For a NTZ to be acceptable they felt it must apply to all users (commercial and recreational) and compensation should be available for those affected. Forty members of the advisory committee were contacted and 25 replies received. Of these 54% were in favour of the idea, 14% were against. 60% thought it was achievable and could be effectively managed. Angling community contacts made the comment "we support the idea in principle but do not feel that angling is an environmental threat to the area".

Skomer MNR wrote to the same 80 commercial fishermen from whom 6 replies were received. In summary fishermen were willing to discuss the idea and some supported it in principle, but the main concern was the effect of displacing the current fishermen and the knock-on effects this would have on others in the fishing community.

Mrs Y Evans noted that she and the Marloes fisherman had met with MNR staff to discuss the idea of a NTZ and how it could be introduced whilst safeguarding the interests of the local community to use and fish the area. She was concerned that the effect on the local community could be significant and anticipated that the local Community Council would formally object to a proposal which did not protect their interests.

Mr P Newman agreed that the discussions had been very useful and that MNR staff were hoping to have similar discussions with the rest of the fishermen currently fishing the area.

Mr P Coates said that all the ideas from these discussions needed to be summarised and any byelaw would be discussed with the local community before it was put forward.

Mr P Newman told the committee about other meetings with English Nature (Lundy MNR) and with Cornwall County Council (St Agnes Voluntary NTZ). They made helpful comments such as avoiding the term “No Take Zone”, pursuing a regulatory rather than voluntary approach (problems with this at St Agnes), and including both anglers and commercial fishermen. Options for helping the fishing community included employing them to help monitor the effects of a NTZ Reserve and granting Marine Stewardship Status to participating fishermen to help increase the value of their catch.

Dr D Parker asked how the NTZ at Lundy operated – PN replied it was an East West split with the NTZ on the eastern side. This hadn’t involved too much opposition from the fishing community as the only fisherman had recently retired.

Mr F Bunker had recently been diving at Lundy MNR and had noticed an increase in the abundance of fish species. This was backed up by experience in New Zealand where a NTZ there had reported a 400% increase in the abundance of pelagic fish species (Red Snapper) in 6 months. This may mean that pelagic species should not be over-looked; a NTZ could be very beneficial for them.

Mr P Marshal commented that the size of the NTZ at Lundy MNR was so small it was unlikely to have a significant effect on the numbers of pelagic species in terms of fisheries stocks.

Mr P Coates asked if any monitoring was being done at Lundy MNR? Mr F Bunker replied that it had recently been established and was hopefully going to continue on a regular basis. He thought that the monitoring would concentrate on crustacean species and not fish.

Mr P Newman informed members that the MNR had been consulted about a large-scale monitoring contract being let by English Nature. The project would involve areas of the Pembrokeshire coast as well as sites on Lundy and North Devon to look at the effects of the NTZ.

Dr M Havard suggested that, using the experience from other examples of NTZs around the world, the term “non intervention zones” could be used. She was of the opinion that this should include the prohibition of taking samples for research as well as for recreation / commercial reasons and that this would be a good principle to adopt at Skomer MNR.

Dr R Crump commented that the taking of some samples was necessary in order to obtain accurate identification, but that this need not mean the destruction of the organism. He maintained that it would be wise to allow some form of limited scientific sampling under a permit scheme.

Mr P Newman stressed that the MNR is already no-take for everything other than seafish, and has been since designation. MNR byelaws (see endnote<sup>\*</sup>) require that no living organism should be taken or harmed except under permit; this includes research / scientific studies for which permits currently have to be obtained before any sampling can be carried out. The MNR team are very careful to use non-destructive sampling techniques and return any samples alive whenever possible, and specify that contractors and other researchers do likewise. Since only fishing is excluded from the existing “no-take” measures (except for scallops and scallop dredging), it is only amendment to sea fisheries regulations that are necessary to extend the “no harm” principle to all users.<sup>1</sup>

Mr D Gardner added he thought it would be very difficult to monitor species and habitats without doing some sampling. He then informed the committee about the development of the South and West Wales Fishing Communities. Objective One funding had been secured and 3 full time officers will be appointed from June onwards. This group will be very keen to develop partnerships with other organisations to discuss ideas such as NTZs and set up schemes to gather the scientific facts. The fishing community had an open mind on the NTZ issue but were very aware of the precariousness of their future position. He added that the timing of a NTZ proposal might be unfortunate as fishermen faced an uncertain future.

Mr P Coates said that the powers are there to bring about a NTZ at Skomer MNR, but enforcement would be difficult. There was little by way of compensation available at present except for short-term closures of shell-fisheries (not appropriate in this case). Other mitigation options could include re-stocking, enhancement of brood stock, employing local fishermen to monitor the effects of a NTZ and making Skomer MNR a V-notch release area.

Mrs Y Evans asked what rights there were for taking for personal consumption? Mr P Coates answered that this was a difficult “grey area”.

Mr M Camplin added that currently these issues are being faced with the rights of bait diggers. The ruling of a recent case stated that it was acceptable to manage certain areas so long as personal rights were not completely removed, i.e. there would have to be other areas within a reasonable distance where the rights were not removed.

Mrs Y Evans said that the local community council would object to the right of fishing being taken away from the area of the North Marloes peninsula.

Mr P Coates said that any byelaw would have to have the support of the local community in order to be passed, but also any restrictions would have to be justified to the Welsh assembly.

Mr P Smithies said he thought the policing of a complete NTZ on the Marloes Peninsula would be impossible and asked whether it would be possible to exclude this area and include an area like Grassholm? Mr P Newman said that excluding the mainland was an option to explore, but that any area outside the MNR was not under the remit of Skomer MNR and therefore not being considered.

Mr S Morris asked how the local community at Lundy were considered in the discussions for the NTZ there? Mr P Newman replied that as the island was well off shore and was managed by the Landmark Trust there was no real issue with recreational shore angling and the only commercial interest had recently retired.

Dr M Havard asked if there was some flexibility to allow shore angling in certain areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Explanatory note: CCW byelaws are unable to “interfere with the exercise of any functions of a relevant authority” (Section 36(6) of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981). As the SWSFC are the relevant authority for fisheries management in the area of the MNR, CCW’s byelaws do not apply to fishing for or removal of sea fish (as defined in relevant fisheries legislation).

Dr R Crump said the MNR staff were having trouble contacting anglers as a group to discuss such ideas. He suggested one compromise might be to allow fishing but only on a catch and release basis.

Mr P Coates said it was technically possible to prevent angling with a byelaw but very difficult to enforce. If angling were to be allowed this discrimination between commercial and recreational users would have to be justified to the Welsh Assembly. The data that the MNR staff collects should be used to put forward a strategy which balances the concerns of all groups. He added that the SWSFC was currently facing an uncertain future in terms of under funding and their very existence was under review. This has implications as to how a byelaw could proceed and be enforced. The coming year should see clarification of these issues.

Mr D Gardner said that fishing communities faced a similar uncertain future and were unable to effectively plan for the future.

Mrs Y Evans stated that policing was currently a problem and she had information to suggest that scallops were still being taken from the MNR but not being landed at Martins Haven.

Mr B Bullimore agreed that it was likely that scallops were still being taken, but that the current research suggested that formal prohibition had resulted in a significant increase in the abundance within the Reserve. Whilst he did not condone the taking of scallops, the original and main purpose of the byelaw was to prevent damage to seabed organisms from towed gear. MNR staff were unlikely to be able to stop a determined effort to take scallops. They also depend on relevant information being passed to them

### **3. REPORT OF THE 2003/4 SEASON**

Mr P Newman gave an illustrated report on the 2003/04 season. This included a demonstration of a computer-generated video of the underwater scenery around Skomer Island produced by Mr M Camplin. This video was being used in the MNR exhibition.

Future plans include more in the MNR monitoring program to help CCW meet Biodiversity Action Plan species and habitat targets for monitoring and increasing academic links, by making data available for research and education use and supporting student projects. The Pembrokeshire Marine Code has used Skomer as a template for its zone maps for other sensitive coasts. Miss K lock continues to be the local Seasearch coordinator and Mr M Burton has supported the Milford Haven Waterway Environmental Surveillance Group which provides a link to the activities within the Haven.

There were no major incidents to report but entanglement of seals is still a problem with 12 cases reported in the 2003/4 season.

### **4. MONITORING UPDATE**

Mr M Burton gave an illustrated report on the field projects completed in the 2003/4 season.

Mr P Newman commented that local fishermen had been very helpful in supporting the student crustacean project and had offered their future assistance.

Mr P Coates added that one local fisherman had given his historic catch and landing records to one student for analysis.

Dr R Crump asked if any small lobsters had been seen. M Burton said that not many had been seen, but that was probably due to the fact that MNR staff did no diving at night, which is when they are most active. He added that small crawfish had been encountered more often in recent years.

Dr D Parker asked how unusual the long-term datasets were? Mr M Burton replied that Skomer MNR's data set are unique in the UK and a recent JNCC report into time series studies had referenced many pieces of work from the MNR.

Mr F Bunker added that Lundy MNR had some monitoring programs, but so far they had been sporadic as they did not have the on-site team that Skomer MNR has and were unable to do regular monitoring. He emphasised the importance of continuity in monitoring and that most monitoring fails because it is not maintained and regularly carried out.

Mr B Bullimore said that most of the other long-term data sets that did exist elsewhere were for sediment communities and involved destructive sampling techniques. A particular value of the Skomer work was its focus on non-destructive photographic monitoring and the inclusion of reef habitats in the wide range of monitoring projects undertaken.

Mr P Newman added that the photographs had proved very valuable in allowing new ideas to be applied to the whole historic data set. For example the sponge community photographs dating back to 1993 have recently been re-analysed to provide a full time data series for cup coral monitoring.

Mr P Newman reported that the Skomer MNR staff had recently attended a JNCC workshop on marine monitoring to share their experience with other agencies around the UK. The MNR's monitoring programme had been widely praised and it was noted how much was achieved at Skomer on a similar budget to a single large SAC monitoring project.

Mr M Burton said that monitoring projects do not show their real value for many years and the length of the Skomer projects means that they are now starting to show real results.

Dr R Crump agreed that it was vital that they continue.

## **5. REVISION OF MNR USER REGULATIONS LEAFLET**

Mr P Newman explained that it was planned to reprint the "User Regulations" leaflet. The Pembrokeshire Marine Code trial zone maps have included sensitive areas for cetaceans. To bring the MNR leaflet into line with this would involve putting some hatching around the north end of Jack Sound and off the Mew stone. These areas would be labelled as areas where extra care should be taken when driving boats. This would then refer to the existing code of conduct for cetaceans.

Ms A McConnell asked if records of cetacean sighting would also be collected? Mr P Newman said that currently the crew of the Dale Princess were systematically recording sightings for the MNR and these provided a quantifiable record.

Mr D Chant asked if boat collisions with dolphins were a problem as he had experience at Ramsey of dolphins being struck. He suggested it was down to the unskilled handling of boats by a minority.

Mr P Smithies asked if highlighting cetacean areas would bring an unwelcome increase in the boat traffic in those areas. Mr P Newman said that the link would be made to the Pembrokeshire Marine Code that was designed to protect cetaceans and control the way boats were handled around them.

The committee approved the amendments.

## 6. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr L Richardson asked if the taking of scallops was still a concern. Mr P Newman replied that although it was likely to still occur the joint SWSFC/CCW posters had made a big difference in getting the message across.

Mr I Johnson added that Mr P Newman's talks to local dive clubs made a big difference to diver attitudes about collecting shellfish, especially with new members. He suggested that more talks were given.

Dr M Havard told the committee about the Heritage Lottery Fund bid for Skomer Island. This has been given stage 1 approval and stage 2 approval is hoped for in June this year. She thanked all involved so far in considering the interpretation elements of the project and reminded them that their involvement would be required again in the near future if funding goes ahead as there would be funding available for the MNR exhibition.

Mr I Johnson said if a NTZ were to increase the numbers of fish dramatically the area could become a honey pot for anglers. He was concerned that this would result in increased angling litter, which is already a problem.

Mrs Y Evans asked the committee to acquaint themselves with the wide range of services and amenities offered in the local community and said how pleased she was that the village hall had been used to host the meeting. Dr D Parker asked if the meeting should be held here in the future – the committee agreed unanimously.

Mr D Gardner offered his congratulations on the work done by Skomer MNR.

Dr D Parker gave an overview of recent changes in CCW and how they would affect the MNR:

CCW currently employs 600 staff and has a budget of £60 million. With a wide remit across both land and sea, it has recently been restructured to better focus delivery of its ten-year vision through five "theme" groups:

- 1 - Raising Quality – protecting areas such as Skomer MNR
- 2 - Enabling Others – partnership initiatives with other organisations / people e.g. Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme and other grant aid initiatives.
- 3 - Improving Access – interpretation as well as access to the countryside.
- 4 - Understanding Change – monitoring the environment.
- 5 - Sustainable Living – emphasising the importance of sustainable development.

The five former CCW "Areas" have been simplified into three "Regions"; Skomer MNR lies in the West Region. The Regional Managers are now directors and report to the Chief Executive.

Dr Parker went on to say how Skomer MNR fitted very well into the corporate objectives: by protecting the MNR it achieved a vital role under the "Raising Quality" theme and also contributed to the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC. The MNR's excellent record of maintaining links with the local community through the Advisory Committee and volunteer projects and its good academic links fitted well with the "Enabling Others" theme. The long MNR data sets obviously contributed to "Understanding Change" and the Skomer MNR monitoring program would be very important for the monitoring of the SAC. Finally the MNR's work was widely inclusive of people and made many contributions to the access and interpretation objective. Mr M Camplin's computer-generated video of the underwater scenery around Skomer was an excellent example of this.

Mr S Morris said Pembrokeshire College appreciated the support of the MNR with student placements and projects.

Mr J Warneford said the Marine Code will be recording cetacean sighting and these will be available for all.

Mr D McDonough offered to contribute his sightings of dolphins offshore from the MNR to an appropriate recipient. Mr M Camplin and Dr M Havard offered to provide contact details.

## **7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Next meeting to be held on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2005 at Marloes Village Hall.

If necessary to progress the NTZ concept, an additional meeting will be called.

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\* Subject to the provisions of byelaw 4 (which refers to the overriding legislation of relevant authority, e.g. SWSFC) in relation to any part of the reserve no person shall, without a permit from the Council issued for that purpose under byelaw 5 or without a reasonable excuse, intentionally or recklessly -

- (a) kill, take, destroy, molest or disturb any animal or plant in that part,
- (b) do anything which interferes with the sea bed in that part, or damage or disturb any object in that part,
- (d) deposit rubbish in that part.