

**SKOMER MARINE NATURE RESERVE**  
**ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES OF 17TH MEETING, TUESDAY 25<sup>th</sup> April 2006**  
**HELD AT MARLOES VILLAGE HALL**

P R E S E N T

Mr T Allen	DEFRA, SFI
Mr B Bullimore	Retired MNR Officer
Mr J Brown	Wildlife Trust South & West Wales
Mr M Burton	Countryside Council for Wales
Mr F Bunker	Marine Conservation Society
Mr M Camplin	Countryside Council for Wales
Dr R Crump	CHAIRMAN
Mrs Y Evans	Marloes & St. Brides Community Council
Miss J Hodges MBE	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
Mrs J Jones	British Sub Aqua Club
Mrs G Lister	Orielton Field Centre
Ms K Lock	Countryside Council for Wales
Ms A McConnell	Countryside Council for Wales
Mr D McDonough	Welsh Yachting Association
Mr P Marshal	DEFRA, SFI
Mr P Newman	Countryside Council for Wales
Mr J O'Connor	Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers
Mr J Orchard	Pembrokeshire Canoeists
Mr G Phillpot	South and West Wales Fishing Communities Ltd
Mr J Reynolds	Dale Sailing Company
Ms M Rees	Environment Agency
Dr S Shackley	University of Wales, Swansea
Cllr W Roberts	Pembrokeshire County Council

Apologies were received from:

Mr J Archer Thomson (Dale Fort Field Centre), Ms S Bailey (World Wide Fund for Nature), Mr P Coates (South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee), Mr J Deason (Pembrokeshire County Council), Mr H Dyer (WASAC), Mr R Ellis (National Trust), Ms C Heeps (Crown Estate), Mr M Kaiser (School of Ocean Sciences, Bangor), Mrs C Millican (Orielton Field Studies Centre), Mr D Miller (MCA), Cllr B Morgan (Marloes & St. Brides Community Council), Dr S Morris (Pembrokeshire College), Mr B Oxenham (WASAC), Mr P Smithies (Marloes & St. Brides Community Council), Mr T Theobald (Pembrokeshire County Council), Ms S Tomson (RYA), , Mr D Worrall (CCW), Mr R Thomas (CCW), Mr P Varallo (EA), Dr C Wooldridge (Department of Maritime Studies and International Transport, Cardiff).

Absent were:

Ms B Emmett (Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Bangor), Mr C Flannery (West Wales Divers), Dr M Havard (SWWWT), Mr I Johnson (Old Mill Diving Services), Mr D Love (RNLI), & Ms V Swales (Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum), Mr G Perryman (WAG).

The Chairman welcomed all and proposed that Mr B Bullimore be invited onto the committee as he has now retired from CCW, but would still be able to give valuable service to Skomer MNR. This was passed by those present.

## **1 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE SIXTEENTH MEETING (26<sup>th</sup> April 2005) AND THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING (8<sup>TH</sup> SEPT 2005)**

The Chairman went through the minutes of the two previous meetings and asked for any corrections.

The minutes for both meetings were passed as a true and accurate record.

Mr J Brown gave a quick summary of the progress of building work currently running on Skomer Island. The work is due to be finished at the end of the 2006 season.

Mrs Y Evans told the committee that Lockley Lodge was due to be completed in the next 6 weeks.

## **2 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

The chairman reported that he had written to the Welsh Assembly Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside with regard to the MNR fishery byelaw proposal. A reply was received from Jill Thomas of the Welsh Assembly Marine Policy unit, which stated that the issue of marine reserves would be discussed as part of the Marine Bill consultation.

He added that Christine Gwyther AM had asked a question of the Minister in November. The reply seemed to imply the Minister was not fully aware of the current situation and had not been properly briefed on the outcome of the byelaw proposal.

The chairman also said that the Welsh Assembly had stated an intention to follow a different route to any English Marine Bill, despite strong representation for a Marine Bill by DEFRA.

A consultation meeting would be held in Cardiff on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2006.

Dr S Shackley commented that DEFRA had carried out a good deal of consultation involving many experts in the field and that for the Welsh Assembly to ignore this advice and use a disparate set of policies to legislate for the marine environment in Wales was very worrying.

Ms J Hodges added that the DEFRA consultation document was available on the Internet. The deadline for comment is the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2006.

Ms A McConnell informed the committee that CCW would be making a formal response to the consultation.

Mr F Bunker commented that the Minister's response to the question asked by C Gwyther was not acceptable and that the Minister should be made aware of the issue. He added that in his experience of asking questions of the Welsh Assembly he seldom got an answer to the question he asked.

Mr T Allen added that DEFRA had sent all the details with regards to the proposed byelaw to the Welsh Assembly so they should have had all the information.

## **3 ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2005/6**

Mr P Newman gave an illustrated presentation of the main events occurring in the 2005 season.

The staffing situation at the MNR had recently received a blow as a result of the resignation of Dr L Luddington. Not only was it a great pity to lose Louise, but also the current financial climate in CCW meant that it was very unlikely that she would be replaced. This meant that the MNR would have to operate with only two full time and one part time staff for at least the next season. Mr Newman explained that this effectively halved the amount of diving that could be done and would mean that some projects would have to be dropped. He asked the committee for suggestions as to what work should be curtailed.

Mr F Bunker said that four staff were essential for safe diving operations and this was the current practice used by CCW's HQ diving team. Mr B Bullimore encouraged MNR staff to make a case for the position to be reappointed as soon as possible.

The Chairman proposed that he should write to CCW demanding that the position be retained.

**Action: Chairman**

Mrs A McConnell said that she agreed that the committee should make its opinion clear to CCW, but that CCW was under a funding shortfall for running costs that required a further twenty jobs losses over the next year for the organisation. A replacement for the position was very unlikely. There was a chance that money would become available later in the year but this would not be known until September, too late for this field season. She added that there was money available for contract work, but new bids could not be made for a further three months.

Mrs Y Evans and Ms J Hodges both stressed that, in addition to the H & S diving issue, the MNR work was critical for its contribution to technical advice on the marine environment not just in Wales but UK wide. A case should be put forward so that this was not compromised. It was essential that the current outputs from the MNR were maintained and that the profile of the MNR work continued to be increased in the UK.

Ms K Lock presented the MNR photo competition category winners and invited the committee to vote for the overall winner during the refreshment break.

#### **4 THE MNR – A RETROSPECTIVE**

Mr B Bullimore gave an illustrated presentation of his work with the Skomer Marine Nature Reserve from the early 1980s through to the present day.

#### **5 MONITORING REPORT 2005/06**

Mr M Burton gave a summary of monitoring results for the 2005 field season.

Mr J Orchard asked if any patterns were being observed that could be connected to climate change. Mr M Burton said that the main project that focused on climate change was the UK-wide Marclim project that included 3 sites in the MNR and 5 other sites in Pembrokeshire, all surveyed by MNR staff.

Mr J Brown noted that there had been an increase in birds feeding on snake pipefish. Did this indicate an increase in their population? Ms K Lock said that the eelgrass survey at North Haven was to be repeated this summer and it would be possible to include recording numbers of snake pipefish in the survey.

Mr G Phillpot said that the spider crab migration is about five to six weeks later than usual this year and this could be due to the cold winter.

#### **6 EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION**

Mr P Newman said that the MNR booklet and poster had been very popular and that all stocks were now depleted. News on a reprint of each for the new season was awaited from CCW's publications staff.

Mr P Newman gave a brief summary of the Skomer Interpretation plan. The plan included interpretation at the Island visitor centre, Lockley Lodge, Fisherman's Cottage and the Coastguard lookout. Interpretation of the marine environment will be in Fisherman's Cottage with some at the Coastguard lookout. A firm had been contracted to do the fabrication and

design and another firm to do the technical camera element. CCTV cameras are planned for the Wick and North Haven, and if there are sufficient funds there are also plans for an underwater camera positioned on the Loaf at North Haven. Data from the weather station (fixed on the Coastguard Lookout) will be displayed in Fisherman's Cottage using a touch screen option; a web cam is also planned at the Coastguard Lookout. Ruth Davies is the Wildlife Trust officer responsible for the co-ordination of the project and we are currently waiting for a progress report from her.

Mr J Orchard suggested that the MNR's profile on the Internet should be raised. If it was not possible to improve the MNR's pages on the CCW website then perhaps the Advisory Committee should have their own website as a means to promote the MNR. It was agreed that this was a good idea, however Mr P Newman said this would take MNR staff time that we did not have. Mr F Bunker suggested that this could be possible project for an IT student.

## **7 OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr B Bullimore noted that in the annual report violations to the speed limits seemed to be from charter boat operators. Were these operators in the Pembrokeshire Marine Code Group and should we be reporting them? Mr P Newman said that there is still the problem about what we can do to those who break the code, it has been suggested that they will not be able to advertise in the PCNP paper 'Coast to Coast'. He also added that the couple of incidents involved new skippers who had either not been properly briefed by their companies or who had not followed instructions. It was unusual to see offences repeated by the same people.

Ms K Lock presented the results for the MNR photo competition overall winner – the award went to Andrew Kiddier for his photo of the basking shark. All agreed that the photo competition results should be given as much publicity as possible.

Mr J O'Connor said that 'My Pembrokeshire' website was very popular and that this would be an excellent place to present the results in addition to the local newspapers.

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2007 at 2.00pm Marloes village hall.