

SKOMER MARINE NATURE RESERVE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF 22nd MEETING, TUESDAY 12th April 2011
HELD AT MARLOES VILLAGE HALL

P R E S E N T

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| Mr J Archer Thomson | Dale Fort Field Centre |
| Ms G Bell | Marine Conservation Society |
| Mr B Bullimore | Independent |
| Mr F Bunker | Marine Conservation Society |
| Mr M Burton | Countryside Council for Wales |
| Mrs S Burton | Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation |
| Mr M Camplin | Countryside Council for Wales |
| Ms K Collins | Environment Agency |
| Dr R Crump | CHAIRMAN |
| Dr W Dodds | World Wildlife Fund Cymru |
| Mrs Y Evans | Marloes & St. Brides Community Council |
| Ms K Ramsey | Countryside Council for Wales |
| Miss J Hodges MBE | Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority |
| Mr B Jones | British Sub-Aqua Club |
| Mrs J Jones | Countryside Council for Wales |
| Ms K Lock | Countryside Council for Wales |
| Mr D Love | RNLI |
| Mr P Wensley | Welsh Assembly Government, Fisheries |
| Mrs A Winterton | Countryside Council for Wales |
| Mr D McDonough | Welsh Yachting Association |
| Mr D Miller | Maritime and Coastguard Agency |
| Mrs C Millican | Orielton Field Studies Centre |
| Mr P Newman | Countryside Council for Wales |
| Ms K Collins | Environment Agency |
| Mr J Reynolds | Dale Sailing Company |
| Mr T Theobald | Pembrokeshire County Council |

Observers:

Ms B Henshall (Wildlife Trust Wales), J Clarke (Wales Environment Link).

Apologies were received from: Mr D Bell (WASAC), Mr C Green (Crown Estate), Mr J Hamer (CCW), Mr J O'Connor (Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers), Mr N O'Sullivan (Wales Marine Fisheries Group) Dr D Parker (CCW), Ms C Price (Royal Yachting Association), Mr P Smithies (Marloes & St. Brides Community Council), Mr R Thomas (CCW), Dr C Wooldridge (Department of Maritime Studies and International Transport, Cardiff).

Absent were: Mr J Deason (Pembrokeshire County Council), Mr M Kaiser (School of Ocean Sciences, Bangor), Cllr M Davies (Pembrokeshire County Council), Mr R Ellis (National Trust), Mr I Johnson (Old Mill Diving Services), Ms S Kessel (Wildlife Trust South and West Wales), Mr T Luddington (Pembrokeshire Marine Code), Mr S Morris (Pembrokeshire College), Ms J Williams (Welsh Assembly Government), Mr C Taylor (Wildlife Trust South and West Wales).

1 MINUTES FROM THE 2010 MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed by all present as a true and accurate account with no amendments.

2 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

ACTIONS:

- Skomer MNR Booklet – the booklet is not yet on the CCW website but the website has recently been upgraded and new content (including the MNR booklet) will be added soon.
- The website now hosts a “blog” by P Newman. There are currently 2 blogs; one about the 20th anniversary and one about sea slugs.
- The weather data from Wooltack Point and oceanographic data from the buoy off Skomer Island are now on a website where the data can be viewed with hourly updates – <http://environmental-change.ccw.gov.uk>
- The WAG newsletters (2 so far) were sent out with last years minutes as requested.

3. STAFFING

Ms Jen Jones has been appointed as the seasonal assistant for 2011.

The future of this post is still very uncertain and CCW is looking into the possibility of hosting a suitably qualified PhD student to act as the seasonal assistant but so far there are no firm commitments.

4 ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2010/11

Mr P Newman gave an illustrated summary of the main events of the 2010/11 season.

Mr B Bullimore noted that the television coverage of the local N.A.R.C. group doing an underwater clean up around Skomer provided the MNR with publicity. He relayed thanks from Ross Bullimore to the MNR staff for their support, and also thanked them for assisting in the MHESG sediment sampling in Milford Haven.

Mr F Bunker thanked the MNR for assisting in a diving project on the maerl bed in Milford Haven.

Mr B Bullimore asked if anyone knew why Skomer MNR was not included in a recent P.S.C.O report on the science of marine reserves. The European edition included several examples of protected areas for scallops from elsewhere in the UK and cited the scallop studies in Isle of Man, but nothing was mentioned about Skomer. Ms K Ramsey said CCW were only contacted at the late proofing stage.

Mr P Newman did a presentation on the Skomer MNR scallop studies at the 2010 European marine symposium in Edinburgh, therefore the latest MNR scallop report will be published in the symposium proceedings.

5 MONITORING REPORT 2009

M Burton gave a presentation on the features of the Reserve.

Pink sea fans suffered the greatest number of losses in 2010 and there is little sign of growth in the smaller fans.

Plankton samples were taken throughout the 2010 field season and analysed by Plymouth Marine Laboratory. The methods have been refined to concentrate on zooplankton and the plan is to take water samples for chlorophyll content in the 2011 season.

A comparison of infauna in St Brides Haven by CCW and EA showed that Skomer MNR sites are notably more abundant and diverse, than those outside the MNR.

6 MARINE AND COASTAL ACCESS ACT AND HIGHLY PROTECTED MARINE CONSERVATION ZONES

Mr P Newman gave an update on the Marine and Coastal Access Act and the Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) process. Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) have decided that due to the large areas of marine Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) in Welsh waters only highly protected MCZs will be designated. CCW were tasked with writing ecologically-based 'site selection criteria' and using these 20-25 focus sites have been chosen. The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) will refine these down to 6-12 potential sites. In July 2011 TAG will refine these further with respect to socio-economic and practical issues; this will then go to a steering group for endorsement. A public consultation will then follow for 12 weeks. TAG will refine the potential sites further and a second public consultation will follow. The recommendation of potential sites to ministers is planned for late summer 2012 and a final public consultation in winter 2012/13 and then designation in June 2013. This is the current planned timetable but the results of the WAG elections in May 2011 and delays in the process could change this.

It is not yet known if Skomer MNR has been chosen as one of the potential highly protected sites, but under the Marine Bill it will have to be declared a Marine Conservation Zone with or without a highly protected status when the Bill is fully enacted.

CCW will continue with the current Skomer MNR management and monitoring programme until WAG decides its future. Currently there is no information on how or by whom the new MCZs will be managed and monitored in Wales.

Mrs A Winterton added that the future of CCW is also unknown as it may be absorbed into a new government body (Single Environment Body). Current developments of the 'Marine Spatial Planning Framework' will also effect management of the marine environment in Wales.

Ms G Bell asked if the Advisory committee will hold a special meeting once the first round of sites are out for public consultation. The Advisory committee could then submit a response. The Chairman agreed that a special meeting should be called to respond to the public consultation. Mr P Newman said he will circulate the consultation document to committee members when it comes out.

ACTION PN & RC

Mr B Bullimore asked when the Marine and Coastal Access Act would be implemented in Wales. Mr J Clarke said that the Wales Environment Link (WEL) had been pushing for this but it had been postponed by WAG due to the elections. He added that WEL would continue to apply pressure.

Mr B Bullimore added that there were also issues with who was going to manage the MCZs. It is currently very unclear and a major concern, especially as he had heard that management would be on a voluntary basis. Mr J Clarke said that at their last meeting Jane Davidson (Environment Minister) had stated that the voluntary approach was going to be the first choice, but if that approach failed then legislative measures would be needed. WEL are currently commissioning a report on the effectiveness (or not) of voluntary marine protection which they will submit to the next Environment minister. (Note: Mrs J Davidson is stepping down from WAG and will not be standing in the forthcoming elections).

Ms K Ramsay said that she was not aware of the voluntary management being considered. The chairman stated that he was dismayed that after 40 years of marine protection at Skomer that a voluntary management system option is being considered. Mr F Bunker asked what England were planning, to which Mr J Clarke replied that they too were considering the voluntary approach and that the WEL report is being prepared for both England and Wales.

Mrs Y Evans asked how the public consultation was going to be run? Mrs A Winterton said that the consultation will be WAG run and currently no one knows how this will be done. Ms G Bell let the committee know that both herself and Mr J Clarke sit on the 'Stakeholder and Citizens Engagement group' (SCEG). This group was set up to run the public engagement of the MCZ's process and is to be led by Wales Coastal and Maritime Partnership (WCMP). There were concerns about how effective this lead would be given WCMP's lack of staff. It was reported that no-one within the SCEG knows how the process is going to be run.

Mrs Y Evans recommended that the committee should get local Assembly Members involved. They should be sent copies of Skomer MNR reports and invited to a meeting to publicise what is happening at Skomer. Ms B Henshall added that WEL will be raising awareness in Wales with the new AM's.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr R Crump asked if a copy of SMNR report 2010 could be sent to Mr Bill Ballantine.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 17th April 2012 at 2.00pm Marloes village hall.