

SKOMER MARINE NATURE RESERVE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF 20th MEETING, TUESDAY 20th April 2010
HELD AT MARLOES VILLAGE HALL

P R E S E N T

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
Mr P Coates	South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee
Dr R Crump	CHAIRMAN
Mrs Y Evans	Marloes & St. Brides Community Council
Ms L George	Welsh Assembly Government
Mr J Hamer	Countryside Council for Wales
Miss J Hodges MBE	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
Mr B Jones	British Sub-Aqua Club
Mrs J Jones	West Wales Diving School
Ms K Lock	Countryside Council for Wales
Mr D Love	RNLI
Mr P Marshall	Welsh Assembly Government, Fisheries
Ms A McConnell	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
Mr J O'Connor	Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers
Ms S Perry	Wildlife Trust South and West Wales
Ms M Rees	Environment Agency
Mr J Reynolds	Dale Sailing Company
Mr C Taylor	Wildlife Trust South and West Wales
Mr R Thomas	Countryside Council for Wales

Observers:

Mrs A Bunker	Countryside Council for Wales
Dr C Duigan	Countryside Council for Wales
Dr B Sanderson	Countryside Council for Wales

Apologies were received from: Mr I Ball, and Ms L Dodds (World Wide Fund for Nature), Cllrs B Morgan and M Cullen (Marloes & St. Brides Community Council), Mr R Ellis (National Trust), Mr C Green (Crown Estate), Mr I Johnson (Old Mill Diving Services), Mr D Kennard (Welsh Association of Sub-Aqua Club), Ms S Kessel (Wildlife Trust South and West Wales), Mr T Luddington (Pembrokeshire Marine Code), Mr S Morris (Pembrokeshire College), Mr N O'Sullivan (South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee), Ms C Price (Royal Yachting Association), Dr D Parker (CCW), Mr P Smithies (Marloes & St. Brides Community Council), Dr J-L Solandt (Marine Conservation Society), Mr T Theobald (Pembrokeshire County Council), Mr P Varallo (Environment Agency), Ms L Wilberforce (Wildlife Trust South and West Wales), Ms J Williams (Welsh Assembly Government), 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).

1 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE SEVENTEENTH 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

Mr R Gibbs has been appointed as the seasonal assistant for 2010.

Mr P Coates and Mr P Marshall gave an update on the Scallop Fishing (Wales) Order 2010: In addition to technical restrictions and a shorter season the dredging for King scallops is now prohibited within 1 mile of the Welsh coastline, and within certain bays including the whole of St Brides Bay. This new legislation does not have an expiry date but can be refined if necessary. The new order acts as an extra buffer to the MNR byelaw, which still currently stands.

3 ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2009/10

Mr P Newman gave an illustrated summary of the main events of the 2009/10 season.

Mrs Y Evans asked if the CCW booklet could be available for download on the CCW website so that it can be used as an education aid. P Newman said that this was planned and that the new web site has made it easier to get content on. The MNR has been approached by CCW's website team to do a video "blog".

ACTION PN

Mr D McDonough asked if the Skomer weather data was available on the internet. Mr M Burton will send the link for the current website, but as yet it is only a data download, there is not a specific web page just for Skomer.

ACTION MB

4 MONITORING REPORT 2009

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

Sea fans have shown a marked decrease in necrotic tissue, it will be interesting to see if this continues in 2010.

The territorial fish survey in the summer of 2009 surveyed a total area of approximately 10000m². The general results agreed with previous diver and video surveys. There was a higher abundance of territorial fish found at the sites around the island than at the sites off the mainland. The reasons for this are not clear.

The MNR has started work on a project with the Warsaw Institute of Oceanography looking at the seasonal settlement of marine organisms. This ran successfully throughout 2009 and will be continued in 2010.

Plankton samples were taken throughout the 2009 field season and analysed by the Sir Alex Hardy Foundation of Oceanographic Science. The results provide the first complete record of plankton species in the reserve. Plankton sampling will continue in 2010 with the samples being analysed by Plymouth Marine Laboratories. The methods have been refined to concentrate on zooplankton and to be compatible with other plankton projects in the UK.

The infauna and epifauna projects were combined following comparisons between the two datasets. Students from Bangor University worked with Reserve staff deploying video and stills cameras on a towed sled. This was used at the deeper monitoring sites where diving is not possible. All 12 monitoring sites have had samples taken for grain size analysis, biology and a video/ still record of the community present. The samples are still being worked up.

The telemetry buoy tested in 2009 failed due to seawater leaking into the electronics. It has been repaired and modified by the suppliers and is going to go onto a dedicated mooring in 2010. The buoy will have a GSM communication system which should facilitate the data being made available via the CCW website.

The passive sediment collector samples have been analysed and show some interesting changes. Pre-2000 the samples were dominated by the mud fraction but post-2000 the sand fraction is dominant. The 2009 samples reverted back to being dominated by mud.

The 2009 season was notable for the high abundance of common mussels at sites in the Reserve. These appeared to have settled in the late autumn of 2008 and persisted through the whole season. (Early dives in 2010 have shown the mussels still to be present in high numbers on the west side of Skomer).

Dromia personata (hairy sponge crab) was observed several times in the Reserve with lumps of *Cliona celata* on its back. Numbers seem to have increased in recent years and individuals are now larger.

5 SKOMER MNR PHOTGRAPHIC COMPETITION

Ms K Lock presented the category winning entries of the Skomer MNR photographic competition to the advisory committee. The photograph of a cuckoo wrasse by Tim Moran was declared the overall winner by the committee.

6 UPDATE ON MARINE AND COASTAL ACT

Mr J Hamer (CCW) gave an update on the progress of the Marine and Coastal Act 2010:

Skomer MNR will become a MCZ (Marine Conservation Zone) at some point in 2010. At this stage there will be no change to its level of protection. Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has initiated the MCZ Project Wales, with the establishment of a steering group, a technical advisory group and a stakeholder and citizen engagement group. The aim is to recommend sites for HPMCZ (Highly Protected Marine Conservation Zone) status by 2012. Skomer would be subject to the same selection process as any other site before any higher level of protection is given to it.

WAG will have the power to issue Nature Conservation Orders to control unregulated activities. WAG also take on the marine planning function for Coastal Protection Act and Food and Environmental Protection Act consents and are in the process of drawing up a Marine Policy Statement.

Mr B Bullimore added that the lessons learnt from Skomer MNR have been represented in the MCZ steering groups and that the research potential of a site will be counted as a socio-economic criterion not an ecological criterion.

Mr F Bunker said that at the Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum/WAG workshop held in January WAG staff had stated that Wales was ahead of England in the process of setting up MCZs. If this was the case he wondered why Lundy MNR had already been declared an MCZ whereas Skomer had not? Mr J Hamer replied that the English networks were at the same stage of development, and that Lundy had simply made the name change from MNR to MCZ, although it did have a "No Take" area in place prior to the Marine Act coming into force.

Mr P Marshall added that WAG fisheries staff would now have more environmental enforcement powers beyond purely fisheries issues. These would include dealing with such things as marine mammal/seabird disturbance cases.

Mr P Coates explained that in England the former Sea Fishery Committees would become Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities with a remit to cover the wider marine resource rather than just fisheries. In Wales the same functions would be the responsibility of the WAG fisheries department, with staff from the former sea fisheries committees and Marine Fisheries Agency. The new legislation increases the limit for fines to £50 000 and brings in powers to suspend licences and even issue fixed penalty tickets. Existing sea fishery byelaws (including those protecting Skomer MNR) have been transferred to Welsh Statutory Instruments (SI's).

Ms G Bell said that CCW has provided funding for the Marine Conservation Society to make the general public aware of the MCZ project and that she is therefore available for public talks.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ms G Bell informed that Marine Conservation Society has launched a website called "Your Seas Your Voice", where the public can vote for or against sites that are recommended as possible MCZ's. Skomer MNR currently has attracted the highest number of votes. The results will be presented to WAG and Natural England.

Mrs Y Evans asked if "One Voice Wales" has been included in the consultation on the MCZ project. The community councils have not received any information as yet. Ms G Bell replied that the Wales Coastal and Maritime Partnership was responsible for consultation, but it was waiting for organisations to contact them rather than going out and getting responses. It is very important that all interested organisations contact the WCMP to get involved.

Mr B Bullimore added that there has been a lot of concern that the consultation has not been proactive enough.

Mrs S Burton suggested that a copy of the WAG news letter (which details the consultation process) is sent out with the minutes of the MNR advisory committee meeting. She also suggested that the committee writes to WAG inviting them to use members' expertise.

ACTION PN

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 12th April 2011 at 2.00pm Marloes village hall.