

**POLZEATH MARINE
CONSERVATION GROUP
ANNUAL REPORT
JANUARY 2017- JANUARY 2018**



The Polzeath Marine Conservation Group (PMCG) is a strong and passionate local group made up of volunteers and related organisations from the area working towards the conservation and improvement of the local marine environment, as well as raising awareness with the wider public of the need for marine conservation in Polzeath. We also support a unique and special Marine Centre set in the heart of Polzeath village, the only independent Marine Centre in Cornwall.

The group primarily supports Polzeath's Voluntary Marine Conservation Area (VMCA) which was launched in 1995 by Cornwall Council. It includes the 'inter-tidal areas' (those exposed at low tide) between Pentire Point and Trebetherick Point, plus it also takes in the splash zone from north of Baby Bay to Pentire Point.

As a voluntary designation, the role of the VMCA is not to impose restrictions, but to engage communities and encourage sensible use of the natural resources in the area. In doing so, the marine environment will be protected for future generations to enjoy.

The VMCA aims are to:

- Protect and conserve
- Raise awareness and increase understanding of the marine environment
- Encourage education and research.

The large numbers of visitors to Polzeath combined with valuable and vulnerable wildlife make this form of education and marine conservation essential for the protection of such an important ecological and economic resource. To achieve our key aims, PMCG carries out a variety of activities including:

- An annual programme of public events and school education visits aimed to engage people of all ages and abilities in the marine environment and the importance of its protection.
- A varied volunteer programme, ranging from training sessions to surveys and socials, to guide volunteers in taking a larger role actively conserving Polzeath's coast and sea
- An active role working with local community groups and conservation issues, such as Polzeath Area Residents' Association and Polzeath Voice commenting on any planning and consultation applications that may arise, particularly those that require an environmental perspective.

The opening of our Marine Centre to the public, throughout the year, to offer opportunities for the public to learn about marine wildlife and speak directly with the Groups' volunteers about the work that we do.

This report has been made up of written contributions from members of the 2017 committee and our seasonal beach rangers.

We thank them all for their dedication and support. Our figures have been taken from daily records taken of event participants and visitors.

Summary of year 2017

In 2017 we engaged with approximately **3658 people**. We ran **26 events**, carried out **1 shoresearch survey**, funded **4 boat surveys** and we took part in **4 training sessions**. We have **11** members on the committee, **53 family members**, **17 single memberships** and **3 business members**. We have **96 contacts on our mailing list** and approximately **21 actively involved volunteers**; **1** new volunteer was trained up to man the Marine Centre. PMCG volunteers also took part in **10 Beachcare beach cleans** and we ran **2 Mega beach cleans with Clean Cornwall and Keep Britain Tidy/Beachcare**, one in April and one in September. More than **3750 volunteer hours were donated in 2016**. This year we also independently supported 2 Summer Beach Rangers who joined us from July – September.

The Marine Centre

The Marine Centre was open on **160 days** (which was **22 days** less than 2016 as we had rangers for a 3-month period not for 6 months as in the previous year) for a total of **650 hours** (which was **79 hours** more than 2016). We managed to have the centre open for 6 hours a day, 7 days a week for the whole of July and August and welcomed **2616** visitors through the door, which thanks to the extended time the centre was open was an increase of **831**.

The Centre supports and is supported by **21** Volunteers of which 7 open the centre regularly as well as **2** volunteer rangers who helped us throughout the summer period.

Volunteers

A massive thank you to all the volunteers with their hugely different life experiences and skills, without whom the Polzeath Marine Conservation Group would not be able to function. They gave a total of more than **3750** voluntary hours in the 12 month period not only staffing the Marine Centre but attending training sessions and conferences, working on 2 major projects that should come to fruition in 2018, maintaining the marine centre, preparing for the next year's events with all the admin that has to go with that and the making of "Sharkey the rubbish sculpture" who is residing outside the marine centre. He has been designed and created by Laura out of rubbish collected on Polzeath and nearby beaches with a small team of helpers and is in demand for a county wide

tour during the summer.

Beach Rangers

We were lucky enough to secure the help of 2 beach rangers for the summer who are both studying for marine biology degrees, Sophie at Exeter University and Lily at Plymouth University. Luckily, they both had very different skills from art and design to excellent communication to go along with their knowledge of rockpool creatures and marine conservation. They along with some of our volunteers opened the Marine Centre every day for the whole of July and August which increased the visitors to the centre and allowed us to spread the conservation message more widely.

We thank both Sophie and Lily for making the season such a successful one and for helping to try and solve our IT and social media problems.

Events and Activities

In 2017 the group organised a total of published 24 events including Marine Discovery Day, 2 Mega beach cleans in conjunction with Clean Cornwall, Polzeath Beachcare and Keep Britain Tidy, supported the Seaquest Public Sea watch, Cornwall Wildlife Trust with beach visits, and helped with or hosted 3 school visits.

Rockpool Rambles

There were 9 Rockpool rambles arranged for the summer but as these were all over subscribed we decided to add 2 extra ones, this meant that in total we took 467 people down the beach to show off our stunning rockpools which were teeming with life.

Get Crafty

Get Crafty sessions continued in their usual Wednesday morning slot with the Marine Centre packed out each week often with returning budding artists from the year before to create some outstanding marine based works of art. Thank you to Kathy for masterminding and supervising this hugely popular event.

Beach and Coastal Events

We had a varied programme during the year starting off on a very blustery day in April with a Lobster release which was run by the Lobster Hatchery at Trevoze Head. Participants could name a baby lobster before it was released.

In May we spent a very interesting afternoon with Megan Adams (Wild Thymes), discovering what edible delicacies can be found along the coast path and in the rockpools between Polzeath and New Polzeath.

June found a few hardy volunteers in the rockpools again on a freezing, wet day participating in the

Big Sea Watch search, where all the data recorded is sent to the Marine Conservation Society and then the Natural History Museum.

August found a group trekked out onto The Rumps for the annual Seaquest Sea Watch Survey. Kinder weather this year and a large pod of Dolphins was spotted, all information being recorded and sent back to CWT for collation.

A beautiful autumnal week in mid-October was the Shoresearch survey, unfortunately with one day of torrential rain all day, and that was the Polzeath survey day, the day can't be changed, so a very small group of hardy volunteers including a fantastic family group set off to the rockpools lead by the amazing Matt Slater and volunteer Adele. We surveyed all the rockpools and found Stalked Jellyfish but alas no St.Pirans Crabs.

Talks

The first talk of the year was a hugely popular evening with a talk on Pentireglaze mine by Tony Davies. The tube station was packed, with many being local people who were non-members of PMCG and now are.

The next talk was from Tony House about Cornish Wildlife, particularly Otters. This was during the main holiday in August which can be a difficult period to encourage people to attend talks, but once again we had a very good attendance.

The Fishpeople film was the next event which we held at the Tubestation and again at The Regal Cinema in Wadebridge, which was brought to us by Sue Sayer from CCSGRT. This was a totally inspiring film about a group of people whose lives have been inspired by the sea.

The final talk of the year was by Sarah Stevens from NT who explained what is happening at Trevoze Head and the NT's work preserving and encouraging wildlife on their land. This was a hugely encouraging talk and sent us all home with the thought that not all is lost.

Marine Discovery Day

Our biggest annual event dawned to a beautiful morning that very quickly turned into a hot first day of June. The beach was packed, seeming even more so with a tricky high tide mid-morning, however this did not stop the gazebos being erected from groups including Cornwall Wildlife Trust Your Shore Rangers, National Trust, Cornwall Seal Group, Fathoms Free, RNLI, and British Divers Marine Live Rescue. The stalls on the beach and the marine centre were busy all day and put on a great selection of educational games and activities with most areas of marine conservation and life covered in a fun way. A massive thankyou to all who helped on a day that is so important for us and to all the local businesses who donated prizes and gifts for the tombola.

School visits

We welcomed 3 school groups to the marine centre this year. The visits usually involve a Rockpool Ramble, tides permitting, litter pick and quiz, sand sculptures and a visit to the Marine Centre where the mural quiz is always hotly contested. The volunteers all love helping with these visits and seeing the children so interested in marine conservation.

Publicity

The events leaflet was produced by Vickie and distributed far and wide. Thank you to all the local businesses who allow us to publicise all our events on their notice boards and in their windows, to Mike for giving them the information to Haley for managing our website www.polzeathmarineconservation.com and to Tina and Jo for our Facebook page (search Polzeath Marine Conservation Group and Centre) which has 946 followers which is increasing steadily as we get better at social media! We also now have Instagram and Twitter accounts which we will become more active on when the new rangers teach us how to use them.

Boat Surveys

POLPIP 2017 Summary By Sarah Millward, POLPIP Co-ordinator

PMCG work closely with Sue Sayer of Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust and Newquay Sea Safaris on the POLPIP surveys. POLPIP is a hugely successful conservation project, leading to large amounts of data on mobile species and habitat use and has contributed to the designation of the Padstow Bay and Surrounds, and the Hartland Point to Tintagel Marine Conservation Zones.

CSGRT are very proud of this partnership project with Polzeath Marine Conservation Group which began in 2011.

We are hugely grateful to PMCG members who sourced funding to cover the POLPIP survey expenses.

Together we are making a huge contribution towards the conservation of our precious marine environment by gathering the research evidence required to support designation decisions! Thank you to everyone involved in the 2017/18 POLPIP surveys and here's to many more.

Tesco Bags of Help Scheme and Patagonia funded POLPIP surveys during 2017. Surveys were due to be carried out quarterly, during the months of January, April, June and November. Unfortunately, due to forecast conditions surveys planned for January and June did not go ahead despite reschedule dates being put in place. An additional survey was carried out in August when a window in survey conditions allowed.

POLPIP surveys have been made possible by the support of a strong group of dedicated volunteers donating their time and money. In 2017 over 500 volunteer hours were put into these surveys.

In total 273 seals were recorded during the three surveys of which at least one was net entangled and 12 were identified from the CSGRT ID catalogue. Seals from this survey area were also seen in SW Wales, west and south Cornwall. 17 further seals were added to the ID catalogue, so we can monitor their movements in subsequent surveys. Amongst other marine wildlife we reported to CWT Seaquest:

-118 Common dolphins

-3 Harbour Porpoise

-8 Sunfish

-3 Barrel jellyfish and 150 other jellyfish

Detailed analysis of birds and bird nesting ledges was also undertaken each survey by bird expert, Dave Williams for submission to the BTO.

In addition to this POLPIP surveyors observed 273 items of ghost fishing gear; ranging in size from less than a metre to more than five metres in length or diameter. Ghost gear was consistently observed in birds' nests and on important seal haul out sites. Risk ratings were assessed for each piece of ghost fishing gear observed. Where possible ghost fishing gear was removed. Human activity is also monitored and recorded on each survey. Detailed reports are written for all data taken on each POLPIP survey.

During 2016 PMCG and CSGRT worked together to produce a detailed report of all harbour porpoise sightings during POLPIP surveys to date in support of the designation of proposed SAC in the Bristol Channel Approaches. Following submission of data all five harbour porpoise SACs consulted on in 2016 were given Ministerial clearance and were submitted to the European Commission for approval to designate on 30 January 2017. In 2017, the Bristol Channel Approaches became a Candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC).

POLPIP surveys will continue to run quarterly in 2018. Huge thanks to everyone who helped make these surveys such a massive success.

Fundraising

Financially we have had a successful year and consolidated our financial base which will allow us to operate in the next year with some certainty.

We have had some concerted fundraising throughout the year to fund our various projects. We were successful with our Tesco Bags for Help grant which enabled us to fund our valuable marine life boat surveys. We were also able to update our marine centre equipment. We feel passionate about our work and that has resulted in attracting likeminded groups to support our projects. The fund raising for our Water Refill Station project commenced very slowly at the beginning of last year, we then received an incredible boost to our funds from the players of People Postcode Lottery and Sea-Changers, subsequently local support has been overwhelming and with the help of SWW this has allowed us to expand this project. We thank those local businesses who consistently support us financially: The Point at Polzeath, the Tubestation, the Yoki family, St Minver Highlands and St Minver Lowlands Council, Cornwall Council, Polzeath Area Residents Association, our local councillor Carol Mould, Valley Caravan Park, the Bridge Bistro, the St. Minver Link, Quinnian Trust, The Rum Bar and lastly Cornwall Wild Life Trust.

Although the above organisations support our ongoing projects, it is due to our continued support from annual membership, small public donations and sales of ReFill bottles, books etc. from the marine centre that provide the funds for the everyday running of our centre.

Conclusion

We have had another fantastic year with ever increasing numbers visiting the Marine Centre and attending events and that is solely due to the amount of time our volunteers donate to the group, a massive thank you to you all.

In 2018 are aims are

To increase public and business's awareness of marine conservation.

To increase member numbers including business membership

Complete the 2 projects that have been worked on throughout 2017 and will be reported in the next annual report.

It has been decided that the next report will cover from January 2018-April 2019 and thereafter from April-April to mirror the financial year.