



Polzeath Marine Conservation Group Annual Report



January 2016 – January 2017

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Introduction

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 2016 committee and our seasonal beach ranger. 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 2016 Outcomes

In 2016 we engaged with approximately **2850 people** with (1,781 visiting the Marine Centre). The Marine Centre was open on **182 days** for a total of **571 hours**. We ran **27 events**, carried out **1 strandline survey** and **4 boat surveys**. We took part in **2 training sessions** and **2 socials**. We have **9** members on the committee, **38 family members**, **28 single memberships** and **2 business members**. We have **100 volunteers on our mailing list** and approx. **30 regular actively involved volunteers**; **4** new volunteers were trained up to man the Marine Centre. PMCG volunteers also took part in **10 BeachCare beach cleans** and we ran **two Mega beach cleans with National Trust and Keep Britain Tidy/BeachCare**, one in April and one in September. This year we also saw the set up of a '2 minute beach clean' board outside Surf's up! in Polzeath.

The centre has also gained litter picking equipment to encourage people to clean the beach which was very popular! **Approx. 2,500 volunteer hours were donated in 2016**. This year we also independently supported our Seasonal Ranger who joined us from May – December. Megan was a huge asset to the success of our group and events this year and we are extremely grateful for all the support and volunteer hours she gave to us.

The Marine Centre

Polzeath Marine Centre remains the only independent centre of its kind in the county and continues to be leased from Cornwall Council by Polzeath Marine Conservation Group.

Between January and December 2016 the Centre was open on **182 days** for a total of **571 hours** (200 hours more than last year). Events began and ended at the Centre and art sessions took place inside the Centre. **1781 people visited our Centre** and hundreds more took note of our sightings board and sales table as they passed by - we are on the main route to a local campsite, pitch and putt, tennis courts and bouncy castle.

The Centre supports **30 key volunteers**, **6** of whom open the Centre on a regular basis throughout the year. In 2016, the Marine Centre Coordinator trained up a further **4 marine centre volunteers**.

PMCG offers training to all those who man the Centre.

The Group has also produced Marine Centre guidelines including a health and safety protocol and a volunteer ranger manual. These were updated in 2016.

Decoration

After the success of the internal decorations in 2015, in 2016 long term volunteer, Laura, headed a project to re-paint the whole outside of the centre. This took many hours from volunteers and members of the public, and the mural itself was designed by Laura. The incredible eye-catching pictures of the marine organisms that can be seen in and around Polzeath cause hundreds of people to stop and look as they walk past. The mural has also enticed a lot more members of the public to have a look inside the Centre!





Thanks to everyone who donated their time to help with this project, and special thanks go to Laura Workman for the design and incredible talent and determination to complete this project, Natalie Engel for the writing, Paul McCullough for the 'Polzeath Marine Centre' signwriting and of course, John Bray for the donation of paints.

Beach Ranger

This year we took a brave step in taking on independently a Seasonal Volunteer Beach Ranger.

We have had some fantastic rangers in the past through a rangers project with National Trust but this year we decided to organise and manage the role and applicant ourselves. The calibre of this years' ranger Megan would not leave us disappointed and like those in the role before her she worked tirelessly from May – December as part of her placement year during her degree at Plymouth University. Megan helped to run all our events, managed the Centre and volunteers, helped fundraise, increased sales and memberships, took part in training but above all became a valuable member of our team.

We thank Megan for all her hard work with us over the summer – we hope it gave her all the experience and skills she was looking for and that she misses us as much as we do her. Thank you so much Megan for all you have done.

We will be recruiting a seasonal volunteer beach ranger every year – applicants are welcome to apply at any time. The placement is self - funding and no accommodation can be offered. We have recruited for 2017 and will now be looking at summer 2018. Apply via our main email if interested.



Megan keeping dry before the Daymer Bay walk.

Events and Activities

In 2016 the group organised 27 events, including our popular Marine Discovery Day. We organised 2 mega beach cleans in conjunction with National Trust and Keep Britain Tidy/Polzeath BeachCare. The group supported the National Trust BioBlitz at Lundy Bay and welcomed two schools to the beach.

Rambles

These events were as popular as ever in 2016 and 6 took place this year. The year started with an extreme rockpool event organised by Cornwall Wildlife Trust and supported by Cornish Rock Tors. The group explored a cave on Pentire Headland which is home to a gold and scarlet cup coral *balanophyllia regia*.

The National Trust kindly supported the group by leading two rambles and a third was led by Abby Crosby from Cornwall Wildlife Trust and sponsored by John Bray. Due to adverse weather two rambles were combined leading to a record number of participants on one ramble (100+)

Beach and Coastal Events

This year we organised a seaweed pressing session. We had great fun learning about the seaweed and being artistic.



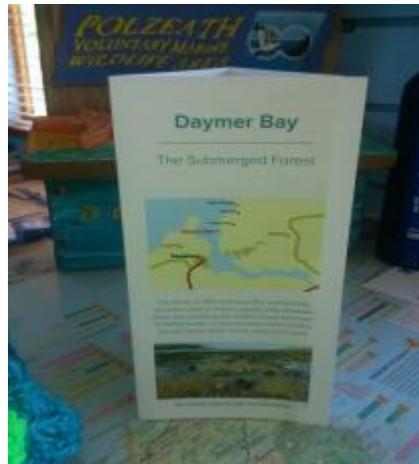
Volunteers and members supported the National Trust's Lundy Bay BioBlitz in July. An exhausting weekend but worthwhile by all the amazing finds and data collected.

On a wet and windy day in July a few brave members joined Abby Crosby from CWT for a Seaquest Seawatch at the Rumps. Abby spotted a sunfish but nothing else was spotted that day.

In August, the National Lobster Hatchery released baby lobsters at Port Gaverne, the adults as well as the children were enthralled to see the release. We were then led by Megan Adams from Wild Thymes to explore the edible seaweeds and plants around the coast and were treated to some delicious snacks prepared by Cat and Megan.

Our final outdoor event was a geological walk at Daymer Bay led by Frank Howie and sponsored by John Bray. Another wet and incredibly windy day but a fantastic opportunity

to learn about the submerged Fossilised Forest. Here we also launched our new Daymer Bay Fossilised Forest leaflet. Thanks to Sue Lister and Frank Howie for compiling it and John Bray for funding it – pop to the centre to grab your copy.



Fossilised Forest Walk at Daymer

Craft Sessions

Get Crafty sessions were held on Wednesday mornings from the middle of July to the end of August, 8 in total. While the weather in August was generally good, Wednesday mornings inevitably dawned overcast and damp so children and their parents, ranging from in number, 3 children to 15, were crammed around tables in the Centre. **101** took part over the weeks in total. Activities all had a marine theme and these included making stained glass windows from coloured tissue paper, sewing mermaid purses to making mobiles from materials collected from the strandline. The standard of work was very high, the children's imagination never ceased to amaze us.

Children always leave with plenty of art to take home and to remember their visit by - they learn too and the issue of marine life and marine pollution is never far from our discussions. Thank you to Kathy for masterminding these sessions and to Di for all her support.

Talks

This year we had 6 talks starting with a fascinating evening learning about the wrecks found by Chris Lowe from Atlantic Divers along the North Cornwall coast. He had some exciting tales to tell and interesting treasures to show.

Over Easter, Abby Crosby from Cornwall Wildlife Trust gave an enthusiastic presentation about our local cetaceans and the work done to protect them.

Other evening presentations included Martin Dorey #2 minute beach clean, Richard Peirce who returned to tell us more about his conservation work with sharks and elephants, RNLI beach safety and the future of National Trust at Pentire by their Ranger, Sarah Stevens. Thank you to all those that made these happen, to the presenters that gave their time for free and to the **250** people who attended in total. We are thrilled to have support of the Tubestation too, they allow us to host these talks at their venue at no cost to PMCG.



Martin Dorey with a #2minute beach clean station

Marine Discovery Day

Marine Discovery Day has become an annual event in Polzeath, started by Cornwall Wildlife Trust under the Your Shore project. Since then the baton has been passed onto us. In 2016 the event was organised by Cornwall Wildlife Trust's Matt Slater, and we are extremely grateful for all his hard work.

Marine Discovery Day brought together a variety of marine related organisations including: Cornwall Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Shark Trust, Fathoms Free, Cornwall Seal Group, Marine Conservation Society, The National Lobster Hatchery, Polzeath Surf Life Saving Club and RNLI lifeguards. The event was fun, educational and had something for everyone. We are extremely proud of this event which gives us the opportunity to truly celebrate all that is Polzeath.

A massive thank you to all the organisations, their staff and volunteers who made this event possible.



Polzeath Marine Discovery Day 2016.

School Groups

The Schools Project that was set up in 2015 from funding from the Waterfront, was continued this year. We had two schools bring classes to our beach – St Mary’s School, Bodmin and St Minver School both visited within the last few weeks of term before the summer holidays. These days included a sand sculpture competition, marine bingo litter pick and a talk from the RNLI lifeguards. We also helped BeachCare with a visit from St Breock School, where around 30 children visited the centre to have a look around. Rock brownies and beavers also had a short visit on the 20th July, where we loaned them Marine Bingo sheets and buckets to use on the beach!

Volunteer Activities and Surveys

Several volunteer activities and training days took place in 2016. These included volunteer meetings, socials, a cream tea, a quiz night, beach cleans and Big Seaweed Search training. Volunteers have also represented the group at events such as the Rock Oyster Festival, Lundy Bay BioBlitz (National Trust), Plymouth BioBlitz (Marine Biological Association). In May 2016 four volunteers took part in a First Aid Outdoors course, courtesy of Cornwall Wildlife Trust.

Once again Shoresearch visited Polzeath during their annual week of surveys.

In November our Chair Jo was awarded Volunteer of the Year in the environmental section at the Volunteer Cornwall Awards for her work at the Centre. A great day was had with Vice Chair Jane at the awards and with all the other winners and volunteers from wide ranging organisations – it was fantastic for our Centre to be recognised and Jo thanks her team for the nomination – she believes that really they are all the winners!

Volunteers also attended the Marine Ecology and Conservation Network’s Local to Global Conference (November).

Boat Surveys

Polzeath Photographic Identification Project (POLPIP) 2016 Summary

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.

Due to funding POLPIP surveys were carried out quarterly instead of monthly in 2016, during the months of February, April, June and November.

POLPIP surveys have been made possible by the support of a strong group of dedicated volunteers donating their time and money. In 2016 over 560 volunteer hours were put into these surveys.

In total 478 seals were recorded during the four surveys of which at least 7 were net entangled and 6 were identified from the CSGRT ID catalogue. Seals from this survey area were also seen in South West Wales, west and south Cornwall. 13 further seals were added to the ID catalogue so we can monitor their movements in subsequent surveys.

Amongst other marine wildlife we reported to Cornwall Wildlife Trust Seaquest:

- 2 bottlenose dolphins
- 46 harbour Porpoise
- 20 common dolphins
- 6 barrel jellyfish

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

In addition to this POLPIP surveyors observed 275 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. 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 also 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 (Special Area of Conservation) 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 addition, CSGRT fed in the marine life and human activity data from the first 29 POLPIP surveys as part of the Padstow Bay and Surrounds Marine Conservation Zone Natural England Advice and Guidance consultation.

POLPIP surveys will continue to run quarterly in 2017. Huge thanks to everyone who helped make these surveys such a massive success.

Publicity

2000 events leaflets in 2016 were produced and distributed around the catchment area reaching out towards Camelford, St Breward, Bodmin, Wadebridge, St Minver and Rock.

The Group continued to manage its own website www.polzeathmarineconservation.com, have an active Facebook page (search 'Polzeath Marine Conservation Group and Centre') which currently has **731 likes (712 followers)**, and produced regular newsletters

throughout the year - updating the public and its members on activities and news. Our thanks to Haley for all her website brilliance.



We also advertised our events in The Link magazine, North Cornwall Advertiser, Local Eyes, Cornwall Wildlife Trust (CWT) Wild Cornwall magazine (distribution to 17,000 people), CWT website, Atlantic, Pirate and BBC Cornwall radio websites, Polzeath Marine Conservation Group's Facebook page and website.

Press releases were sent out for larger events and posters put up around the local area too.

Fundraising

Treasurer's notes as follows:

The group have had an excellent year and consolidated our financial base. Income from our Marine Discovery Day was lower as we decided to have a much smaller scale silent auction. The Group benefitted from having a beach ranger for a large part of the year. This is reflected in our school activities and increased sales from our Centre. We have purchased stainless steel water bottles and have a stock of these. This was a financial commitment for us but we feel strongly that it is consistent with our conservation values.

We have been supported this year by John Bray, Polzeath Area Residents' Association, and Jamie Yoki at the Waterfront Polzeath. And we thank them enormously. We have concentrated on more formal funding applications and are currently waiting to hear outcome of a Tesco Bags for help grant which will be between £1000 and £5000.

As well as a small raffle on Marine Discovery Day, we also raised money in other ways throughout the year; general donations, membership fees, charges for events, sale of

books, handicrafts and generous private donations all helped us to cover our costs.

The Waterfront held a Cream Tea fundraiser for us in May raising an incredible £220 and The Bridge Bistro held a charity quiz night for us, raising £206 (they have agreed to do this again in 2017).

The sale of our refillable water bottles continued, still with a sale price of £7. Produced in conjunction with Keep Britain Tidy's BeachCare project, we hope they are encouraging more people to use refillable bottles, and ultimately reduce the amount of plastic pollutants in the sea. Local businesses have been selling them on our behalf, including The Point, Tubestation, Era Adventures, Valley Caravan Park, Surf's Up!, Gonvenna Caravan Park and Lundynant Caravan Park. These businesses will also provide free water refills of the bottles too.



We have also received financial or other support from the following and to whom we also say a huge **THANK YOU**:

Barnecutts – the local bakery in Rock provided free cakes and savouries for the team on Mega Beach Clean days.

Volunteer Sarah Millward - designed the events leaflet and donated a tremendous amount of time to produce it.

Atlantic Diving – Chris and Annabel Lowe supported our boat surveys and provided the boat.

The National Trust - supported us in so many areas including our public events programme, volunteer development and Marine Centre maintenance.

Cornwall Wildlife Trust - were on hand for help and advice and provided training days for volunteers.

Tubestation - continued to donate their awesome venue for our talks and activities, as needed, free of charge. Signed up as refill site for our water bottles and are a point of sale too.

Keep Britain Tidy and Polzeath BeachCare - for their incredibly dedicated work to keeping our beaches clean and working closely with us on areas of conservation and the schools programme. Also for the water bottles that are selling like hot cakes.

Surfs Up! – business membership

The Waterfront – for donating funds and running cream tea fundraising events

Polzeath Area Residents' Association (PARA) – for funds to help support our beach ranger.

John Bray Holidays – for donating money and time to complete our mural as well as sponsoring a ramble and the Daymer walk and leaflet.

We also received a number of private donations which were extremely welcome and that we are sincerely grateful for.

And finally of course, we cannot end this section without taking a moment to consider all the volunteers who have made our work possible. A truly inspiring and energetic group who care passionately about Polzeath, the area, and the future of its marine life.

Our thanks go to everyone concerned who help us to continue our valuable work – we couldn't do what we do without your support.

Conclusion

We have had another fantastic year thanks to the incredible time and dedication that the volunteers provide. We continue to build on the foundation blocks laid by the support of the Cornwall Wildlife Trust's Your Shore Project from five years ago and are keen to move into 2017 with more confidence in our abilities and strength in our numbers. Our Chair Jo will step down at the AGM after three years in post and Vickie will take on the role with Jane continuing as Vice Chair for her third year. We have two new committee members to join the team.

Within the work that we do, our particular goals for 2017 are to

- increase member numbers
- increase business members
- reach and exceed our running costs target of £2,000 per annum through fundraising
- continue with our Beach Ranger Project.

All these goals in turn will enable us to continue our valuable educational and environmental work in the area.

THANK YOU