

2005 : A Year of Campaigning.

The year ahead will be a challenging one, demanding a campaigning response by MARINET members on a broad front if we are to make progress in the protection of the marine environment.

The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution has just produced a Report on the impact of fisheries on the marine environment, and it is clear that the impact is severe and worsening. At the same time, it is clear that neither the UK Government nor the European Commission is prepared to amend its policies to sufficiently address this reality.

The most recent events and reports show that Global Warming is now a proven phenomenon and accelerating, and that greenhouse gas emissions are the primary cause. This means that the world economy has to move out of using fossil fuels for its energy base within the next twenty years, otherwise global warming will become irreversible. Hence, renewable energy from the sea becomes an issue of vital importance and there is little spare time to perfect and install the technology.

The demand to start mining marine aggregate (sand and gravel) from the seabed in the eastern English Channel is growing. Not only are the aggregate companies anxious to secure their first licences in the Channel, but the Minerals Plan for the South East of England shows that future construction activity in the region will be dependant on one-third of its aggregate coming from marine sources, and this dependence is at a time when the East Coast aggregate licences are nearing commercial exhaustion.

The European Commission is pressing ahead with its reform of the Bathing Waters Directive, and it is clear that whilst new microbiological standards may mean a stricter regime in some senses, the actual range of monitoring at bathing sites will be reduced both in terms of the frequency of sampling and the range of pathogens and hazards that are to be monitored.

Against this background, the present UK Government has said that, if re-elected, it will introduce a Marine Bill in order to begin to address the severe pressures that the marine environment is now experiencing. However, will this Bill actually address the problems ? At the moment the terms of the proposed Bill are unclear, but if it does not include provisions for the creation of Marine Reserves which encompass substantial areas of the sea and in which the extraction of natural resources is forbidden, then this Bill is unlikely to be getting to grips with the problems.

So, there are a very broad range of issues confronting the marine environment at the present time and action is urgently required in almost all of them. The task of MARINET during 2005 is to develop public awareness of these issues so that the force of democratic government can be brought to bear upon them, and to develop the campaigns which will create this public awareness. This newsletter reports in more detail on these issues, and offers you guidance and information on how you and your FOE Local Group can begin to make a difference.

MARINET Membership for 2005 : Time to Renew.

Membership runs from 1st January to 31st December, and must be renewed annually. Your membership for 2004 has therefore expired.

It was agreed at the MARINET AGM in September that there should continue to be no charge for annual membership. In other words, membership continues to be free. However, it essential that you complete the membership registration form which is enclosed with this newsletter, and return the completed form to the MARINET Co-ordinator (details on the membership form).

Of course, MARINET needs funds in order to be able to operate and assist you. Therefore, it was decided at the AGM to continue to ask members to consider making a donation to MARINET when you renew your membership. We offer no guidance on the size of a suitable donation. This is entirely your decision, and the policy of relying on donations recognises that members experience different financial means and circumstances. The Network costs around £600 per year to run and we have some fifty members.

MARINET Steering Group.

The Steering Group met in November, and will be meeting again in February. The Steering Group administers and take steps to develop the Network, and implements the policy decisions decided at the AGM. The principal policy decisions taken in September were to continue to develop the national campaign on marine aggregate dredging, and to try to build up areas of expertise within the membership so that our knowledge and capacity to act and campaign is broadened.

The current membership of the Steering Group is:

Chairman:	Phil Coombe	tel. 02392 696070,	email phil@coombe0.fsnet.co.uk
Secretary:	Gina Carrington	tel. 01243 641145,	email Ginac@berendon.fsnet.co.uk
Treasurer:	Alan Pegg	tel. 01273 772912,	email greenpegg@phonecoop.coop
Coordinator:	Stephen Eades	tel. 01249 653972,	email stephen@marinet.fsnet.co.uk
Underwood St:	Nicole Barton	tel. 020 7566 1684,	email nicole@foe.co.uk
Underwood St:	Claire Wilton	tel. 020 7566 1698 / 0113 (Leeds) 389 9961	email clairew@foe.co.uk

MARINET Areas of Expertise.

The Steering Group has put in an application to the FOE Local Groups Support Fund for £500 to provide the MARINET members who have taken on a special area of responsibility to have the funds to enable them to develop their knowledge and expertise. In the first instance, we are hoping to establish five such specialist areas. Three are already operating (marine aggregate dredging, renewable energy from the sea, and marine reserves), and there are currently two vacant areas.

If you would like to take on a special area of responsibility (in an area of your choice, subject to Steering Group agreement) you would be very welcome, and please contact the Coordinator. You do not have to be an expert. The idea is to enable people to learn and build up their expertise and, in the course of time, to make it available to other members. All that is required is enthusiasm and a willingness to learn.

Marine Aggregate Dredging.

This is MARINET's national campaign for 2005, and the Steering Group has put in an application to the Local Groups Support Fund to enable us to develop and take this campaign forward. The MARINET member with special responsibility for this subject is Patrick Gowen, Norwich FOE. You can contact Pat by email: NSAG@ic24.net or tel. 01603 402554, or by post at 17 Heath Crescent, Norwich, Norfolk NR6 6XD.

Dredging the seabed for sand and gravel is often enormously damaging to sealife and the adjacent coastline. In the immediate area, sealife can experience very high levels of mortality and the physical habitat is often profoundly changed. Along the coastline itself, beaches and natural sea defences can be seriously eroded and, once erosion has begun, both local communities and wildlife habitats are placed at great risk.

The objectives of MARINET's marine aggregate campaign in 2005 are as follows:

- 1.** The Environmental Impact Assessments which accompany licence applications are often seriously deficient, and lack basic information about the sealife and habitats in the dredging licence areas. The result is that the scale of damage is being under-assessed and unrecorded. The same lack of professionalism also applies to the Coastal Impact Studies for licence applications, with the result that the impact of dredging on the coastline, and on beaches and sea defences, is being similarly under-assessed. **Therefore, we are calling for a thorough re-evaluation of existing and future marine aggregate dredging licences by Government so that all licences can be verified as meeting with the established principles of sustainability.**
- 2.** The marine aggregate companies want to open up the sand and gravel deposits in the eastern English Channel to dredging. However, the UK Government has not applied the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive to aggregate dredging in the English Channel. Moreover, the Government has failed to obtain statutory status (i.e. by an Act of Parliament) for either the planning regulations or the EU Habitats and EIA Directives with respect to the determination of existing and future marine dredging licences. **Therefore, we are seeking a moratorium on the granting of new marine aggregate dredging licences in the eastern English Channel until the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive has been applied to aggregate dredging in the Channel, and until the UK planning regulations and the European Habitats and EIA Directives have been enacted with respect to marine aggregate dredging licences.**
- 3.** At the present time sandbanks on the seabed (known as "sub-littoral sandbanks") and calcareous reefs made by animals, particularly worms, in sandy areas of the seabed (known as "biogenic reefs") are Annex I habitats listed in the EU Habitats Directive, but the UK Government and English Nature have not designated any such sites in UK waters. Also, gravel areas support very populous and fecund biological communities, and these are some of the most important and distinctive marine communities in UK waters. However, gravel areas are not currently listed under the EU Habitats Directive. Aggregate dredging companies, in their quest for rich deposits of sand and gravel, inevitably focus in on these sandbanks and gravel sites. **Therefore, we are seeking to persuade English Nature and the UK Government to request the European Commission to amend the Habitats Directive so as to list gravel areas as an Annex I protected habitat, and we will endeavour to persuade English Nature to use its present powers to designate as protected habitats those sub-littoral sandbanks and biogenic reefs which are currently at risk from marine aggregate dredging.**

We now come to the vital question: **what can you do to help with this campaign ?** The following are some suggestions and we would, of course, welcome your ideas:

- 1.** We have produced a video (running time 30 minutes), based on television programmes and other sources, which illustrates the impact and damage that marine aggregate dredging causes. **This video is available to all MARINET members free of charge, and we would like you to show the video to your Group's members and then to arrange public showings of the video so that the general public is informed and we can begin to create democratic pressure for change based on the objectives above.**
- 2.** In addition to the free MARINET video, you may also wish to purchase an excellent video about marine life on the seabed. It is produced by **The Wildlife Trusts, and is titled *Beneath the Waves***. We can strongly recommend this video, and it is obtainable from The Wildlife Trust, price £9.99, tel. 023 8068 8936. We suggest that the two videos would make an excellent double bill for show and discussion at a public meeting.
- 3.** As always, **letters to your Member of Parliament and the authorities** (e.g. English Nature) create valuable pressure for change. Therefore, we will be producing an EDM (Early Day Motion) for adoption by your MP later in the year. This EDM will be based on our campaign objectives above, and when you have shown the videos publicly it will provide you and the public with a means to create Parliamentary pressure. Of course, we would encourage you to write to whomever you feel has some influence in these matters.
- 4.** We have produced **two Briefing Papers** on marine aggregate dredging. The definitive Briefing Paper, which is 20 pages in length and includes colour photographs, has been produced by Patrick Gowen. We have also produced a second, shorter Briefing Paper and this is intended as a layman's guide. Both Briefing Papers

are available from the Coordinator, and would be ideal support material at a public meeting. In addition, Pat Gowen has produced some charts and posters for a wall display, and these are available from Pat Gowen.

Please remember, the work done by the MARINET Steering Group can only go so far. **Developing and making a success of this and other campaigns also rests with you.** So please discuss these ideas within your Local Group, and let the MARINET coordinator know of your plans and if you need further help.

Marine Reserves.

Marine Reserves are a key tool in the campaign to protect our seas and coastal waters, and MARINET now has a member with special responsibility for learning about and developing this idea. He is George Uhlenbroek, Isle of Man FOE. You can contact George by email. uhlenbroek@onetel.net.uk or tel. 01624 862633, or by post at Glen House, Dhoon Loop Road, The Dhoon, Ramsey, Isle of Man IM7 1HN.

Marine Reserves have been pioneered by South Africa and New Zealand in order to protect their seas, and in the UK the idea has been developed by Prof. Callum Roberts at the University of York and, in particular, by Greenpeace UK. For an excellent explanation of the ideas behind Marine Reserves you should read the Greenpeace publication, titled *Rescuing the North and Baltic Seas: Marine Reserves – a key tool.*

Marine Reserves are exactly as their name implies. They are areas of the sea where, as a matter of policy, no extraction of natural resources may occur. This means no commercial fisheries, and no dredging for sand and gravel. Similarly, there is no input of materials into marine reserves either. Thus the dumping of sewage and other waste materials is forbidden in order to ensure that the natural chemical balance of the sea is maintained, and so algal blooms leading to eutrophication are prevented.

In the North Sea, for example, Greenpeace believes that only the extensive establishment of a network of marine reserves, covering around 40% of the total area, will be sufficient to save and restore commercial fish stocks. Indeed the recent Report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, which has considered the impact of commercial fishing on the marine environment, underlines the truth of Greenpeace's analysis. **Therefore, MARINET will be endeavouring this year to meet with Greenpeace and other interested parties to see how the campaign for Marine Reserves may be advanced.**

Renewable Energy from the Sea.

The need to find an answer to accelerating Global Warming is beginning to dawn upon the human species; or, at least, amongst those members who are prepared to observe the facts and think rationally. The solution, in theoretical terms, is the conversion of our fossil fuel based energy supply to a renewable, solar based energy supply where, as far as possible, the production of greenhouse gases is eliminated. The technologies that can meet this requirement are diverse and include wind turbines, photovoltaics, combustion of hydrogen, fuel cells, hydropower, and even the unspeakable – nuclear power.

However, finding the right solution is not easy. The British public is highly resistant to land based windfarms, the climate is not sunny enough for a viable photovoltaic alternative at the present time, hydropower has limited room to develop beyond its present capacity, and nuclear power is unconscionable. **Therefore can the sea, which surrounds the British Isles, be the natural resource to meet our needs ?**

Offshore windfarms are already regarded as more palatable than their onshore cousins, and have so far been established at North Hoyle in Liverpool Bay, at Scroby Sands offshore from Great Yarmouth and other sites are under active commercial consideration. All of these sites are visible from the shore. As a result, a project (involving Scottish and Southern Energy and the Canadian company Talisman Energy) is now being developed to test the building of wind turbines in deep water locations which would not be visible from the shore. The site chosen is 15 miles off the east coast of Scotland, adjacent to the Talisman-operated Beatrice Field, and is part of a pan-European initiative known as DOWNVInD (Distant Offshore Windfarms With No Visual Impact In Deepwater). **If successful, the Talisman/Scottish Energy project could lead to the construction of a 1000 MW offshore deepwater windfarm, generating the equivalent of 20% of Scotland's current electricity demand.**

MARINET has a member who has taken on Renewable Energy from the Sea as a specialist area, and he is able to help you with your enquiries. He is John Baum, Pembrokeshire FOE. You can contact John by email: Johning_b@hotmail.com, tel. 01437 541268, or Rock Cottage, Llawhaden, Pembrokeshire SA67 8HL.

Wind turbines are not the only marine renewable energy technology being investigated at the present time, and turbines utilising energy from waves and tidal currents are being given serious consideration. As a result, pilot wave energy schemes are being tested at the European Marine Energy Centre, Orkney, and deepwater turbines which capture energy from marine currents are being tested offshore at Lynmouth on the North Devon coast. Indeed, the UK Government's Department of Trade and Industry has just allocated £50 million to a "Marine Research Development Fund" to assist projects such as these.

It is likely that we will solve our renewable energy needs by utilising the renewable energy that exists at sea, rather than on land. As a result, this promises to be a key area of MARINET's work.

UK Bathing Waters and Reform of the EU Directive.

Hugh Rout, King's Lynn and West Norfolk FOE, has produced a comprehensive analysis of the performance in 2004 of UK bathing waters against the standards of the Bathing Water Directive. He reports:

"Having just spent many interesting hours in collating the Bathing Water statistics for the 2004 season you may wonder how I feel about bathing in the sea.

First of all I would say don't believe all you are told. Blue flags look impressive but as I'm sure you are aware there are lies, damn lies & statistics. That is not to say that there have been considerable improvements over the past few years thanks mainly to the power of the EU in levying heavy fines on those who failed to reach the required standards.

I would recommend anyone who might enter our coastal waters to have a look at the relevant Environment Agency's web-sites. For England & Wales http://216.31.193.171/asp/1_search_input.asp
For Scotland <http://www.sepa.org.uk/data/bathingwaters/bw2004/index.htm>
For NI <http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/environment/waterManage/quality/bathing/bathingqualityni.shtml>

There, I've made it easy for you as you would find that navigating to the required pages is a very trying business. And just to make it more interesting you will find that the 3 sites collate & display their information in different ways. And don't forget Pat Gowen's Good Beach Guide at <http://members.aol.com/wwanglia/gowen3.htm> where you will find the results collated for you with explanations as to what all of the tests actually mean. The 2004 results will arrive shortly.

It was very obvious from the figures that a time to avoid the water is after heavy rainfall when all manner of goodies get washed out as the sewage systems become overloaded. Personally I wouldn't go in the water for a week after such an event. And my recommendation for a really clean beach is Sea Palling. Beaches to avoid : W Scotland and anywhere near Blackpool, despite the Blackpool area achieving 12 of the 16 mandatory status tests in the UK. But that's another story."

The European Commission is also proposing to reform the Bathing Water Directive. This reform, which is still under negotiation, seeks to change the indicative microbiological criteria, to reduce the sampling frequency in areas showing a consistently satisfactory performance, and to eliminate sampling for actual pathogens such as salmonella and enteroviruses.

Interestingly, this appears to be a watering-down of the Directive, but when the new indicative microbiological standards are applied it is clear that the performance of UK bathing waters deteriorates compared to the results against the existing standards. In 2002 under the existing Directive, the Environment Agency was claiming around 98% compliance. But if the same sampling figures for 2002 are measured against the new microbiological standards, compliance in England and Wales falls to around 77%. Therefore, if these new standards were to be adopted, substantial new investment by the water companies would have to be undertaken. The figures in question are listed overleaf, and Hugh Rout records the relevant websites.

Performance of Bathing Waters in England and Wales against the 3 Quality Classes outlined in the proposed reform of the Bathing Water Directive based on 2002 data. Source: DEFRA, 2004.

Quality Class	England and Wales	England	Wales
Excellent	285	230	55
Good	88	78	10
Poor	110	100	10
% compliance (Good and Excellent)	77.23	75.49	86.67
% Excellent	59.01	56.37	73.33

Hugh Rout comments “The EU Commission has published a proposal for the revision of the Bathing Water Directive. It is proposed that the pollution criteria will be tightened but the testing regime to be reduced from 20 tests per season to, in some cases, as little as 3. Recreational waters will not be included in the BWD obviously because sailors & windsurfers & skiers never fall in the water. One big improvement proposed is to actually inform the public of the quality of the water they are about to bathe in & indeed whether it is safe to do so. You can look at the proposals at <http://register.consilium.eu.int/pdf/en/04/st11/st11345.en04.pdf> Defra’s comments on the BWD at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/quality/bathing/revision.htm> ”

RCEP Report on the Impact of Fisheries.

The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP) has just published its 25th Report, titled *Turning The Tide: Addressing the Impact of Fisheries on the Marine Environment*. It is an excellent report, and reading is recommended. A summary of the Report can be obtained free of charge, tel. 020 7799 8970 or email. enquiries@rcep.org.uk . Alternatively, the full Report is available from The Stationery Office, price £60. Therefore, we suggest you obtain a copy through your public library. The ISBN is 0-10-163922-8.

The Royal Commission states in the Overview in the free summary of the Report: “*Society has given much lower priority to protecting the seas compared with protecting the land. This needs to change – urgently.* Overfishing is a growing global problem that has caused serious, enduring damage to the marine environment and led to the collapse of fisheries in many areas. Past fisheries policies have failed, and incremental improvements will not deliver a sustainable future. We face further decline unless there is significant and urgent action. This is particularly important at a time when climate change is likely to put extra stress on the marine environment. **We therefore call for a radical change to increase protection for the marine environment.**” (ref. page 1, italicised and bold emphasis as in the original).

The Key Recommendations of the Report are:

1. Human impact on the marine environment should be managed in a precautionary manner, and fisheries should also be required to conform to this approach.
2. The UK government should establish a large-scale network of marine protected areas. This should lead to 30% of the UK’s exclusive economic zone (200 miles) being established as Marine Reserves closed to commercial fishing.
3. The UK government should develop a statutory system of marine spatial planning (i.e. the equivalent of terrestrial land-use planning) and this should cover all major uses, including fishing.
4. The UK government should introduce a Marine Act which sets out the long-term goals for the marine environment, and which gives statutory force to the marine planning system and Marine Reserves.
5. The UK fishing fleet should be reduced to an environmentally sustainable level, and the UK government should ensure that the same principle is applied to all other EU members.
6. An immediate halt to all deep-sea trawling in UK waters should be introduced by the UK government, and the UK should press the European Commission to ban the use of bottom trawling, gillnetting and long-lining for deep-sea species in EU waters.

Membership of MARINET: Please remember to renew your membership for 2005 (form attached). Also, please note that individuals and non-FOE organisations are welcome as members, and there is no charge.