

MARINET's 4th AGM : Moving Forward.

MARINET held its 4th Annual General Meeting on 11th September at the Friends of the Earth Local Groups Conference in Reading. It was a successful meeting, and this newsletter reports on the outcome and subjects which were discussed.

The two most significant achievements of MARINET during the past twelve months have been the solid progress with the marine aggregate dredging campaign and the launch of our own MARINET website www.marinet.org.uk. However before embarking on a report on these two aspects, it is most important that we address a key issue raised by members at the AGM : **how can the work of MARINET be more interactive and relevant to the work and concerns of its members ?**

This is a vital issue. If MARINET is not meeting the needs of its membership, then we must ask the question, why ? And importantly, how should we remedy this problem ?

It is important to make one thing clear. MARINET is your Network. What does this mean ? It means that MARINET is what you, the members, wish to make of it. Like your Local Group, it is a voluntary organisation. It does not exist as an organisation to which you can refer your problems, and then expect someone else (usually the elected officers) to deal with them and to solve them. This is not the purpose of MARINET, and in any case we do not have the resources to contemplate any such proposal.

Rather, MARINET is what you make of it. It does not exist to do your work for you, but rather to enable you to do your work better and more easily. It exists so that each member can communicate more directly with another. It exists so that members can mutually work together on ideas, problems and campaigns.

Towards this end, we provide a paper newsletter around four times a year to keep you up to date with news and information. We provide an email network (MARINET Reflector) which enables you to communicate directly with the membership at speed and minimal cost. We run a national campaign (determined at the AGM) on an issue of importance which is, as far as possible, of common relevance to the membership. **And now, most importantly**, we provide a website which communicates our information, interests and concerns to the public.

This website is a key example of what MARINET is all about. It is not made by officers acting remotely in some distant place. It is made by you, the membership. All the material on this website has come from the membership. **Therefore, if you have an issue or urgent concern than you want to do something about, then the MARINET website is there and exists so that you can publicise your issue and concerns.** In short, we want you to use it. We want you to submit material. We want you to use it to run your campaigns. To borrow from the eloquence of a notable American President – Ask not what MARINET can do for you, but you can do for MARINET.

MARINET is your Network. Use it !

To use the website contact Hugh Rout hugh@marinet.org.uk

MARINET News.

Elected Officers and the Steering Group.

The following persons were elected as officers of MARINET for 2005-06 at the AGM.

- Chairman: Phil Coombe (Portsmouth FOE), 8 Range Green, Tipner, Portsmouth PO2 8RE, tel 02392 696070
email. phil@marinet.org.uk
- Secretary: Bill Rigby (Hull FOE), 3 Norwood, Beverley, Yorkshire HU17 9ET, tel. 01482 862085
email. bill@marinet.org.uk
- Treasurer: Alan Pegg (Brighton, Hove and Mid-Sussex FOE), Flat 3, No. 7 Clifton Road, Brighton BN1 3HP
tel. 01273 772912, email. alan@marinet.org.uk
- Coordinator: Stephen Eades (N.Wiltshire FOE), Allington House, Allington, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN14 6LN
tel. 01249 653972, email. stephen@marinet.org.uk

During the year, in the period between AGMs, MARINET is run by a Steering Group. The Steering Group comprises the four elected officers, and two officers from Underwood Street. The Underwood Street officers are currently Tom Kenward and Roger Higman. The Steering Group meets as required, and further details about its work are available from Phil Coombe and Stephen Eades.

Members with Special Responsibilities.

During the year, the Steering Group decided to establish positions within the Network for members who have a particular expertise or who wish to run a particular campaign. These campaigners have access to the website in order to advance and explain their work and expertise, and they have each been given an annual budget of £100 (supplied from the FOE Local Groups Development Fund) to assist their work. There are five such positions available.

To date, take up of these positions by the membership has been slow. Two members have considered taking on Renewable Energy from the Sea and Marine Reserves, but the only active appointment has been Patrick Gowen (Norwich FOE) who is working on marine aggregate extraction.

These positions, with access to a specific page on our website, are a marvellous campaigning opportunity. Therefore please consider them for your work and make use of them. Contact Stephen Eades for further details. We are also considering whether we could give a **regional page** to members on the website, for example for members and issues specific to the north-east or south-west or other regions. If you would like to develop this possibility, please get in touch.

Marine Aggregate Campaign.

Full details of this campaign are now available on the website, and these web pages provide access to key information and documents.

The industry is concentrated on the East Coast, from the Humber to the Thames Estuary. The Government is promising a review of all these East Coast licences in 2013. However the evidence of local coastal erosion and long-term damage to marine life is growing, and we are arguing that this review must occur without delay. What is more, the industry now wants to open up the eastern English Channel to aggregate dredging. This area has a rich marine life which, apart from damage caused by trawling, is largely pristine. **As a result we are opening a South Coast campaign in Brighton in November.** Please get in touch for details.

Marine Bill.

The Government has said that it is to consult on a draft Marine Bill during the Parliamentary Session 2005-6. Such a Bill may contain a planning system for the UK marine economic zone (200 nautical miles), the development of Marine Reserves and a Marine Agency. We will be following these developments closely.

All these developments will be reported on our website. You can also obtain further copies of this newsletter from the website. And remember – use the MARINET website for your campaigning !