

MARINET AGM, 9th September.

MARINET is holding its Annual General Meeting on Saturday 9th September at the Friends of the Earth Local Groups Conference, East Midlands Conference Centre, University of Nottingham, from 3.45 to 4.45 pm. All members, both full members and affiliate members are most welcome. If you require details on how to get to the University of Nottingham, please contact Stephen Eades, MARINET's coordinator, stephen@marinet.fsnet.co.uk, or tel. 01249 653972.

This is a most important occasion. The AGM elects the officers who run the Network and it decides the policy for the next twelve months. It is therefore your chance not only to meet with other members but also to play a direct role in determining MARINET's policy and decisions. In addition to the AGM, MARINET will be also running a **Workshop** at the Local Groups Conference on Saturday 9th September from 8.00 to 9.15 pm, and will have a stall throughout the three days of the Conference which runs from 8th to 10th September.

The Workshop will both review the work of the past twelve months and explore where we should be going in the future, particularly in the areas of the industrial dredging the seabed for sand and gravel (marine aggregate) and the new Marine Bill which is currently being proposed by the government. **The Workshop will be aimed at showing how you can play an active part in campaigning to protect our marine environment.**

The Annual General Meeting has the important task of electing officers for the Network. **Anyone who is a member of a Friends of the Earth Local Group can stand for election as an officer of MARINET**, provided that your Local Group is also a registered member of MARINET. The Network currently has 35 FOE Local Groups who are registered members, and 15 affiliate members (individual and non-FOE organisations). Registering as a member of MARINET is very simple. Simply fill in the registration form. There is no charge for membership. Affiliate members, whilst not eligible to stand as officers, are very welcome at the AGM and are entitled to take part in all debates and votes on policy during the meeting.

There are **four officer positions** open to election at the AGM. These are:

Chairman - currently Phil Coombe, Portsmouth FOE.

Secretary - currently Bill Rigby, Hull FOE.

Treasurer - currently Malcolm Scott, North Tyneside FOE – [Note: Malcolm has been co-opted during the past twelve months to replace Alan Pegg, Brighton FOE who resigned due to other commitments].

Co-ordinator - currently Stephen Eades, North Wiltshire FOE.

The officers run MARINET during the year, and implement the policy decided at the AGM. To enable this, **MARINET is run by a Steering Group composed of these four officers and two officers from Underwood Street** (currently Nicole Barton of the Local Groups Department and Roger Higman of the Environmental Limits Campaign). The Steering Group meets regularly, and all travelling expenses are paid.

Please consider whether you, or a member of your Local Group, would like to help run MARINET during 2007.

Review of 2006 and the Way Ahead into 2007.

The significant developments during 2006, reported in more detail below, have been the development of the MARINET website, the on-going marine aggregate campaign, the emergence of the government's ideas for a Marine Bill, a reform of the EU Bathing Water Directive, and the growing realisation that the marine environment offers opportunities for the development of renewable energy. Other issues, like the re-instatement of nuclear power and the impact of global warming on marine ecology are also candidates to take centre stage.

MARINET website: The MARINET website has been a major achievement during 2006, with members supplying all its information and the webmaster, Hugh Rout, compiling it into a superlative library and information tool for campaigning. We now have in-depth information on all the principal areas of MARINET's activities, along with links to other organisations campaigning and providing marine information. **If you have not yet visited the website, you are missing something ! Please inform all the members of your Local Group and other persons who would be interested in this important tool, and visit www.marinet.org.uk .**

Marine Aggregate Campaign: At last year's AGM it was decided to retain our commitment to this campaign because dredging the seabed off our coasts for sand and gravel has major local impacts on marine life, and significant impact on beaches and coastal defences over a wider area. **Marine sand and gravel now supplies around 30% of the aggregate needs of the construction industry in south-east England, and in London the figure is well in excess of 50%** with the marine aggregate producers regarding the 2012 Olympics as a marvellous business opportunity for themselves. This will be at the price of the marine environment, and not just the seas off East Anglia where the industry is traditionally based but now also in the bio-diverse Eastern English Channel where the government has just agreed to a raft of brand new extraction licences.

The Marine Bill: The government has decided that planning laws should extend to UK seas and that there is a case for stronger protection of the marine environment and, as a result, is currently consulting on the content of a Marine Bill to be introduced into Parliament somewhere around 2008. MARINET has contributed to this consultation, and has formulated a number of proposals which will be discussed at the Workshop and the AGM. The main ideas which MARINET is proposing are:

A Ministry for the Sea : political responsibility in government has long been divided between several Departments of State (DTI, DEFRA, ODPM and others) and as a consequence the marine environment has been poorly served. We are proposing that the Marine Bill should establish a specific Ministry of the Sea with a Secretary of State at Cabinet level who is responsible for all marine issues, including fisheries and conservation.

A Network of Marine Reserves : marine nature conservation has been undertaken in a half-hearted manner by government to date. Therefore we are proposing the involvement of all interested parties in the establishment of statutory Marine Reserves in UK seas up to 200 nautical miles from the coast. These Reserves would have their primary purpose as marine conservation and inside them all extractive activity would be forbidden, including fishing. Further, these reserves would be combined together to form a network covering at least 30% of UK seas in order to protect and re-invigorate marine biodiversity which has and is still being seriously damaged.

Independent Agencies of Government for Marine Planning, Marine Licences and Nature Conservation : We are proposing that the Ministry of the Sea should implement an ecosystem-based approach to the management of UK seas, and that three independent Agencies – one for planning and mapping the resources of the sea, one for issuing licences and one for implementing marine conservation – should administer this ecosystem-based approach. These Agencies would be “independent” of each other in order to ensure that their tasks are conducted in an open and transparent manner and are thereby accountable to all users of the sea.

Renewable Energy : It is clear that if the UK is to remain self-sufficient in energy, or at least independent to a large degree of global instability in this area, then the marine environment provides both a significant resource and a tremendous opportunity that must be realised. Offshore wind farms have tended to monopolise public perception, but in fact marine currents and tidal movements probably offer the largest and most dependable resource. The MARINET website now provides a great deal of information and links on this subject.

Local Campaigns: MARINET helps Local Groups and its members with their own campaigns. MARINET is your Network and it follows the needs and direction provided by its members. This is why the AGM is important. **Please try to be there yourself, or send a delegate.** If you cannot, and you want to contribute ideas please contact the elected officers, contact details for whom are on the website www.marinet.org.uk Alternatively, contact the coordinator at Allington House, Allington, Chippenham, Wilts SN14 6LN.