

**Newsletter No. 28, August 2008.  
Marine Information Network,  
Friends of the Earth Local Groups**

**Marine Reserves : No Plaiice to Hide.**

**The Marine Reserves Campaign has reached a significant stage. The Government has recently published and consulted upon the draft of the Marine Bill which it intends to place before Parliament in October and, whilst the Bill still lacks the ecologically coherent network of highly protected reserves covering 30% of UK seas which MARINET argues is essential to protect and restore marine biodiversity, there is clear evidence that this central platform in our campaign has wide support.**

Evidence for this belief comes from our wide-ranging discussion with marine industries and conservation agencies which resulted in a successful seminar organised by MARINET in the House of Commons on 18<sup>th</sup> June involving Sir John Lawton, chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, and Callum Roberts, Professor of Marine Conservation at York University. Further evidence has emerged in the last few days with the publication of the Report by the Joint Committee of the Houses of Parliament considering the Draft Marine Bill, and the recommendations in that Report.

**MARINET attended every session of the Joint Committee and submitted written evidence,** see <http://www.marinet.org.uk/marinebill.html> . Additional to the Government's proposed intentions in the Draft Bill, the Joint Committee has recommended that the Government should place a legal duty on the Secretary of State to create an ecologically coherent network of reserves, some of which should be highly protected, and that this network should extend throughout UK seas out to 200 nautical miles (the limit of the continental shelf) and that a time-frame for this should be specified in the Act. The only one of MARINET's campaign requirements not so far accepted by the Government or the Joint Committee is that this network should cover at least 30% of UK seas (Note: this figure of 30% has the support of the Royal Commission and over 300 academics led by Prof. Callum Roberts). Currently, the Government is proposing reserves which cover just 8.2% of UK seas, date unspecified.

**MARINET will now be developing the Campaign at the FOE Local Groups Conference, 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> September, Loughborough, into a UK-wide lobbying of both Houses of Parliament for an Amendment to the Bill which requires 30% highly protected marine reserves by 2015. *Your involvement in this lobbying of Parliament will become the central feature of our Campaign.***

The details of this will be explained at our **Annual General Meeting and Workshop at the Conference on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September.** As is customary, we will be electing MARINET's officers for the next twelve months at the AGM and discussing policy. Every MARINET member is warmly invited to the AGM. **Those members who are coming to the Conference and AGM please advise Stephen Eades, MARINET co-ordinator, [stephen.marinet@btinternet.com](mailto:stephen.marinet@btinternet.com) tel. 01249 653972, and we will supply you with further details of the exact time and rooms of the AGM/Workshop.**

## **Marine Bill News**

MARINET has submitted to Defra written comments on the Draft Marine Bill. <http://www.marinet.org.uk/marinebill/marinebillsubmission1.pdf>

These explain, in addition to our thinking on marine reserves, why it is essential for the Government to create a Ministry of the Sea with its own Secretary of State in Cabinet if the future administration of marine policy is to be properly determined and organised. This new Ministry of the Sea will ensure that responsibility becomes focused, instead of being divided between several Departments

## **EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive**

The EU has agreed an important new marine law, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. This law will require all members to ensure that seas under their jurisdiction (out to 200 nautical miles from their coasts) attain “good environmental status”. Plans for this must be in place by 2015 and be implemented by 2020. The definition of “good environmental status” includes all commercial fisheries being within safe biological limits in terms of the age and size of their populations, and that marine food chains are in a sound condition.

In this context, the UK Government is currently claiming that it cannot use marine reserves to protect UK fisheries in offshore waters (i.e. beyond 6 nautical miles) because the UK has surrendered sovereignty over fisheries to Brussels under the Common Fisheries Policy.

However MARINET has obtained legal opinion which states that this is incorrect if marine reserves are not used primarily to protect fisheries, but rather **the marine ecosystem as a whole**. Thus the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, with its requirements on members to ensure “good environmental status” for their seas, suggests that the MARINET legal interpretation is correct, provided that in protecting UK fisheries via marine reserves the primary intention is to protect the whole marine ecosystem. To read the text of the Directive: <http://www.marinet.org.uk/marinebill/euframeworkdirective.pdf>

## **Marine Aggregates**

MARINET is greatly concerned by the recent Government decision to issue an aggregate extraction licence for Area 457, Liverpool Bay, at a rate of 1.2 million tonnes per annum. The site is located 15 miles off the W. Lancashire coast which contains one of the most extensive sand dune systems in the UK (SAC status), and is adjacent to the historic sea dumping ground for sewage sludge from Manchester. The EIA, in MARINET’s opinion, failed to properly evaluate the movement of offshore sand which feeds the coastal dune system, and the EIA failed to sample the extraction site for toxic metals, man-made chemicals and radionuclides, all of which may be re-suspended by dredging.

This failure in the EIA procedures for Area 457 joins recent failures in the EIA procedures for Areas 401/2 and 202/436 off Great Yarmouth. MARINET has reported these EIA deficiencies to Government, but we are being ignored. The Marine Bill promises greater transparency of decision-making, and this is urgently required.

MARINET is also following the development of the new aggregate licences in the Eastern English Channel. These new licences are conditional on no adverse effect being recorded by a 5 year monitoring programme, and we have recommended that the monitoring “reference sites” be classed as marine reserves.

## **Motion to FOE Local Groups Conference**

North Tyneside FOE has proposed a Motion to the Local Groups conference asking the Board to consider whether MARINET could be called Friends of the Sea. This is **not** a proposal to change our name which could only be decided at an AGM, following a poll of all members. No such name-change proposal exists.

The Motion to the Local Groups conference, along with an amendment tabled by Durham FOE, seeks rather to explore whether national Friends of the Earth ought to be campaigning on marine issues given the importance of the planet’s oceans to biodiversity and climate; and, as a consequence, whether national FOE should be giving more support to MARINET. Contact S. Eades if you need more information.