

**Newsletter No. 27, January 2008
Marine Information Network
Friends of the Earth Local Groups**

**UK Marine Reserves Campaign
Launched and Seeking Supporters**

There are **two important things** for MARINET members to take note of at the present time. **The first, is the need for you to renew your membership.** Membership, either as a Local Group or an Affiliate, runs from January 1st to 31st December and must be renewed annually. A membership renewal form is attached. Will you please complete this with up-to-date details. We also provide a listing for members on the Regional Page of our website, and this informs the public about your activities. The listing is free. Please update your details about your listing on the membership form, and you are welcome to use this facility if you do not already do so. Our website gets over 300 visits a day from the public. Also, please note that it was decided at our AGM in September to retain the principle that membership is available free of charge. However we do have administrative costs in the region of £750 per annum and therefore if you can manage a donation, according to your means, to assist us with these costs this would be greatly appreciated.

The second important item for you to note is that we have now launched our UK Marine Reserves Campaign. This campaign is associated with the Government's declared intention to introduce a Marine Bill into Parliament in October of this year. The purpose of the Bill is to reform the management of the UK's seas out to 200 nautical miles (the UK Exclusive Economic Zone).

The reality is that our seas are in a state of crisis. This is not an over dramatic statement. Due to many years of mismanagement, the UK fishing industry is in a condition of near terminal collapse. Spawning populations of *Cod, Herring, Halibut and Whiting* are at historical lows, and *Plaice, Mackerel, Sole and Saithe* are being harvested unsustainably (Source: ICES, 2007), and some species such as *Skate* have been fished almost to extinction in UK seas and its close relative, *Thornback Ray*, once common around our coasts is now experiencing similar pressure. In inshore waters we find that important conservation sites, such as Lyme Bay in Dorset, are being seriously damaged by the scallop fishery, whilst in Northern Ireland one of Britain's only 3 Marine Reserves has also been ravaged by scallop dredging – see our website for details. Further offshore, as most members know, the marine aggregate industry strip mines the seabed in licensed locations and its impact on marine ecology is severe.

So, what is the Marine Bill going to do to tackle all this? The answer is that fisheries beyond 6 nautical miles from the coast will remain unaffected, with our Government claiming that it has given away all its powers to the EU and can no longer do anything. It is proposed that marine conservation will be extended from covering 0.1% of UK seas to covering 2% of UK seas, when in reality the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP) has recommended that in order to restore a sound economic and ecological condition to our seas Marine Reserves must be established covering at least 30% of our seas. So, MARINET has launched its campaign to get Parliament to persuade the Government that the Marine Bill must provide powers to create Highly Protected Marine Reserves covering at least 30% of our seas, and the UK Government must require the EU to reform its fisheries management in accord with this. We need your active support for this Campaign. **We need you to lobby your MP and, if you have got the time, we need your support for the Campaign Team. Contact Stephen Eades for full details stephen.marinet@btinternet.com tel. 01249 653972.**

Marine Reserves.

What are Marine Reserves ?

They are areas of the sea which are given special protection. In our case, we also mean that they are “no-take” areas i.e. all extractive activity is prohibited, including fishing, and the term Highly Protected Marine Reserves is applicable. The UK Government means something different, and has two classes of reserves – one known as a Marine Protected Area (MPAs) which are essentially EU sites, and the other is Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) and are identified using national criteria. Both MPAs and MCZs do **not** prohibit fishing.

Why do we need Marine Reserves ?

The key concept behind Highly Protected Marine Reserves is that they do not protect just a particular habitat or species (as is the case with MPAs/MCZs) but rather they protect *the entire ecosystem in their area* and, when linked together in an ecologically coherent way (i.e. protecting fish spawning grounds, *and* nursery areas, *and* feeding grounds *and* migrations routes) to form a network covering an extensive area of all the sea (i.e. 30% or more) they effectively protect *the whole marine ecosystem*

Are Marine Reserves successful ?

- Highly Protected Marine Reserves allow fish to live their full natural life span, with the result that reserves contain *large fish*. When an adult fish doubles in length she produces 8 times more eggs. These eggs display a higher level of fertilisation and survival, and then “seed” the sea beyond the reserves as the larvae drift out on currents. Outside reserves, large fish are now extremely rare because of overfishing. Hence, fishery conservation which does not include reserves will almost certainly fail.
- A study by the RCEP (Royal Commission) of 80 marine reserves worldwide has shown that biomass (total biological material) is 3 times greater in reserves than in areas outside, and that in the reserves the number of species and the size of each species is around 20% to 30% greater in the reserve

Why must Reserves cover 30% of our seas ?

Highly Protected Marine Reserves protect the entire ecosystem (all habitats, all species and all the interactions between the species) and the RCEP looked at 39 scientific studies from around the world which considered how marine reserves could be used to regenerate fisheries. The studies showed it is essential to designate *at least 30%* of the seas as highly protected “no-take” Marine Reserves.

What can I do ?

Tell your MP: the Marine Bill must create reserves covering at least 30% of UK seas.

Marine Reserves Campaign Team.

We have established a MARINET Campaign Team, numbering around 16 people at the present time. They will be producing Briefing Papers which you can see and download from the website www.marinet.org.uk . The Campaign Team also has sub-groups concerned with the media, the lobbying of Parliament and creating grassroots support. Although this is a national campaign, **we need your support at local level.**

We need you to go and see your MP and MEPs, we need you to try and secure coverage in your local press and at other events. We can provide you with support in all these tasks.

Contact the following for help:

Team Leader: Ben Mackinnon 07763 102 253
Briefings: Stephen Eades 01249 653972
Media: Jenny Collins 07845 951 354
Activism/Local Malcolm Hunter 0116 2219639
Groups: Tim Garbutt 07879 631 550
Lobbying MPs: Renata Albuquerque 0208 7487988

If you want to help the national Campaign Team, or to lobby the Welsh, Northern Ireland and Scottish Parliaments, we are still looking for Team members

Other News:

Marine Aggregates:

- We are continuing to challenge the legitimacy of new licences for sites off the East Anglian coast.
- There is evidence that aggregate dredging off the East Coast is leading to increased erosion of the seabed, threatening the windfarm at Scroby Sands.
- We are contesting new sites proposed for the Bristol Channel and Liverpool Bay.
- We are observing closely the monitoring set up by Defra to gauge the impact of new sites in the Eastern English Channel.
- The Isle of Man is now considering licensing aggregate dredging and we are advising IoM FOE.

Renewable Energy:

Our website now has a large section devoted to the latest developments in marine renewable energy, see <http://www.marinet.org.uk/refts.html> We are also reporting on the latest developments in marine current turbine technology. It has huge potential, and it is certainly the equal of offshore wind.

Latest News on the Website:

We carry a comprehensive marine news service, see: <http://www.marinet.org.uk/latestnews.html> We aim to provide you with the latest news on marine aggregates, coastal erosion, renewable energy, the Marine Bill, bathing waters, pollution, marine reserves, global warming and fisheries.