



# Green Centre News

## FOE Northern Gathering 24/25 May 2008

Manchester was the venue for the North West Regional Groups Gathering which, after 3 years, has now become established as an annual event.

Phil Corlett travelled with Bill Rigby, from Marinnet, to Heysbam where they encountered the 1<sup>st</sup> obstacle for the foot passenger - no train to Lancaster but a 20min walk to the nearest bus stop. Bill was impressed with this failure to encourage non-car users?



Start the 'Race' Manchester

The event started with an intro from Tony Juniper (outgoing Executive Director of FoE & a great speaker) who congratulated everybody on the successful campaigning re 'The Big Ask' postcards; as the UK government will very soon put into law a Climate Bill, following directly on from all the local groups' hard work. FoE UK are now pressuring for carbon dioxide (CO2) cuts of 80% not 60% and emissions' from aviation & shipping to be included in the Bill. Go to the link <http://www.thebigask.com/aviation/preview.php> & book your seat.

After the talk by Tony they all set off for a special event on the streets of Manchester. There people had to 'race to save the planet' - by pledging to cut back on our CO2 emissions by shopping local, using bicycles more and targeting aviation etc. The day finished off with round table discussions aimed at giving the groups information and support - then to the bar for a few scoops; which means Sunday morning tends to start with a bit of a hangover.

The days' more serious business was a debate, Parliament style, on whether less emphasis should be put on Climate Change and more on other campaigns. This proved to be quite heated and ended with the Leader of the Opposition coming over to the Climate Change side.

A serious campaign this summer will be the campaign against bio-fuels, which FoE UK intends to be as hard hitting as the 'Big Ask'. The EU is pushing for 10% of road fuels to be bio-fuel by 2020 - which will be bad news for rainforests, the indigenous populations and the planet.

[http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/biodiversity/press\\_for\\_change/biofuels/index.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/biodiversity/press_for_change/biofuels/index.html)

Emphasis is put on networking during the w/e, with upwards of 60 people attending, and IoM FoE has benefited from this with better connections to FoE staff and collaboration with other local groups - i.e. on anti-fluoridation campaigns and GM foods. The whole w/e is vegetarian; the emphasis being on less impact on the planet growing vegetables rather than meat.

Hopefully the hostel staff learnt something too about energy saving whilst FoE were there; by our switching off the many unnecessary electric appliances left on i.e. PC monitors/video games.

As the event is meant to inspire members, and is heavily subsidized by FoE UK, perhaps next year more IoM FoE members should be there?  
Report by Phil Corlett

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### Latest News:

- Eco Day 14th July  
FOE and ZWM will be participating at QE11 High School
- 16th July 7.30 pm  
Free film show  
Ballakermeen High School: The World According to Monsanto
- SITA IOM plan  
resumption of  
electricity production  
at incinerator 1st  
August

## Well done the MEA

It is fashionable at present to take every opportunity to knock the MEA. So bucking the trend it is time to give credit to the MEA for their home generator tariff and the ability provided by this tariff to use the electricity storage method commonly known as net metering.

A common criticism heard of the MEA is 'they will only pay 2 to 3 pence for electric generated and supplied to the grid'. This is a misleading and incorrect statement.

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## Marinet's visit 21/22 May 2008



Coastal waters and shore-lines threatened by off-shore development?

Following concerns about marine aggregate dredging (SAE) from various users of the Island's territorial sea - ranging from commercial fisheries, anglers, divers, bird watchers, marine biologists, the Celtic League and a pressure group called Manx Sea Matters - **IoM FoE** persuaded the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries into inviting the marine arm of FoE UK, who are a group called MARINET, to the Island to put their side of the argument against marine dredging.

The DTI have granted two provisional dredging licenses - which they say in no way allows for actual dredging to take place until a FULL license is granted. Last

year two large and very influential companies, Cemex and Thames Estuary Dredging did some grab sampling.

Marinet's & IoM FoE's concerns are that the 'due process' could be biased to these companies, who have a vested interest in recouping their expenses incurred on the 'sampling', even though the DTI says all environmental impact assessments (EIA) will be carried out. A concern is that the EIA is paid for by the applicant; so hardly neutral!

Some consequences of SAE is the loss of fisheries habitat - (one zone licensed is a herring spawning ground) + sand eels habitat will

disappear (loss of food for cetaceans & birds); dredging can speed up coastal erosion; long plumes of 'spoil' spread miles from these huge dredging ships, to name but a few of the damaging effects of this process.

Bill Rigby of Marinet arrived just in time for the start of the AGM of IoM FoE and to listen to the invited speaker, Capt Mike Brew (DoT), who is Chair of the Island's Territorial Seas Committee (responsible for mineral

## The Bottom Line

Wood cellulose fibre, adhesives, gel, artificial perfumes, coloured dyes, polyacrylate, polyester, polythene, polypropylene, and stearyl alcohol-these are some of the materials used in making disposable nappies. Do you really want them coming into contact with your baby's bottom?

After years of general acceptance because of their convenience we are beginning to realise the environmental cost of disposable nappies.

A baby gets through an average of 10 nappies a day in the early days reducing to around six a day later on. That adds up to about 3,000

nappies by the time they are a year old.

The good news is that modern real nappies now come in many different designs. Some are really colourful and funky. They are easy to use and easy to wash. We even have a local 'nappy lady' Sinead who will come to your home, show her amazing collection and discuss the pros and cons of each style.

If you are receiving Income Support or Family Income Supplement you can get a loan from the DHSS to buy real nappies. The Exceptional Needs Grant and Budgeting Loans Claim form can be obtained from Social Security

Division Markwell House, Market Street, Douglas.

If you would like Sinead the 'nappy lady' to call contact her at [mail@nappybusiness.co.im](mailto:mail@nappybusiness.co.im) or phone 671097 mobile 470197

There is lots more information about real nappies on the website of the Women's Environmental Network [www.wen.org.uk](http://www.wen.org.uk)

The good news is that modern real nappies are easy to use and easy to wash.



Compost ready for your garden; available in handy sized bags or in bulk sacks

## Ballaneven Organic Compost Ltd

The company, started by Martin Birchenough and John Kneen, in 2005, receives about 3.5/4 thousand tonnes of green waste and road sweepings each year, and converts it into about 2000 tonnes of quality compost.

Three grades of compost are offered; 25mm at £10/m<sup>3</sup>; 10mm at £20/m<sup>3</sup> and the top quality 5mm at £30/m<sup>3</sup>. The bags in the photo are £3.50 each or 3 for £10. They can be ordered, for all island delivery, from Keigs in Peel.

The compost is regularly tested by the government laboratory for pathogens, heavy metals etc and exceeds the PASS 100 standard. For further details visit: [www.ballaneven.com](http://www.ballaneven.com) Keigs Tel: 843729

## Marinet's visit 21/22 May 2008

extraction and what happens in our seas). This was a very enlightening meeting for Bill - as he wasn't aware of how our government departments work - and he also learned of plans for the Marine Spatial Plan.

The following day Bill managed to talk on 3 radio stations, meet the Peel Fisheries boss Tom Bryant-Brown and then do an interview with IoM Newspapers; followed by a public talk at St Ninian's school!

Everything went well particularly at Manx Radio where Dan Davies's 'Talking Heads' show had Bill of Marinet, Phil of IoM FoE and Neil Corlett of the DTI who all presented their views &

replied to the public's concerns on marine dredging. This lasted for a full hour.

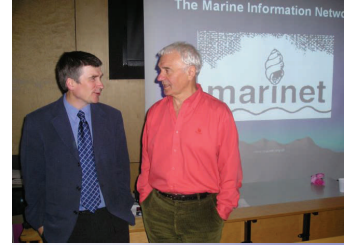
The public meeting on the Thursday night was very kindly set up by Dr Fiona Gell & introduced by the Minister of DAFF Phil Gawne (showing his concern about marine dredging). Bill gave a colourful and well informed presentation to the audience taking many questions such as '...was the sand needed for the runway extension infill?' but the Minister discounted this as the ELA wouldn't be done in time.

Many thanks have to go out to DAFF, for covering the cost of Marinet's visit, and Bill was very

impressed with the Island; saying he would like to return again sometime soon.

For more information on Marinet's extensive work on marine dredging and all aspects of marine information - <http://www.marinet.org.uk/>

Report by Phil Corlett



**Bill gave a colourful and well-informed presentation to the audience taking many questions.....**

## Living with an electric bicycle by Chris Burton (MEAC)

I have always had a love hate relationship with hills. Even at a tender age I appreciated the negative impact of gravity; having fallen off a bike, after getting a speed wobble, descending a hill.

The Island is far from mountainous but, in the vicinity of Port Erin, there are a few steep hills which used to have the warning "this hill is dangerous to cyclists". The reason I mention these hills is not the going down - it's the getting up that takes effort and time; a bit like 'it's not the fall but the sudden stop that does the damage'.

A lot of my journeys are short - to the lifeboat station, shops, friends' houses or the allotment - and, when you live on a hill, it is always going home that is the hardest part of a journey. It made little sense starting the car or motorcycle, so I used to cycle on bikes recovered from the southern amenity site and resurrected from the dead. Many wanted little more than a few new cables and some oil. I wonder why they were discarded in the first place.

So it was a revelation to me that

you could get motors on bikes to get you home; and, following a test ride on a friend's, I decided to look into the product. I decided on a Powacycle as it has a good following, and specification, and uses a metal polymer battery system. I actually bought mine in Bolton but they are now stocked in a Ramsey cycle shop.

The bike is a pleasure to use; has 6 gears and pedal assist - as well as a twist grip that you can use to increase the power available. In our Manx terrain, and with an overweight pilot, its range is 15 miles; although it is advertised as almost twice this! It is quite enough for most journeys. I find that I can cycle from Port Erin to Douglas in 50 minutes and similar to Peel - though I have to find an electrical outlet in which to recharge the batteries to get home. The bike can be peddled without the battery pack - though it is quite heavy going other than on the flat. It works best as pedal assist. In this mode the motor cuts in and out. The bike is restricted to 15 mph as a sensor cuts the motor when you reach this speed - it is best described as if someone is pushing you gently along

the road; and hills and headwinds are easier.

Since we bought the bike, last March, my wife and I have travelled over 400 miles - with its associated offset of fossil fuel. It takes about 2 pence to recharge the batteries; and if I have power available from my renewable energy systems, I can charge the batteries at no cost or use of carbon.

I have been able to carry the bike in the guards van on the steam railway; and we have bought season tickets. This increases the range and usefulness of the bike. I have not tried to get it on the bus yet but I will, in the winter, when the trains stop working.



It is best described as if someone is pushing you gently along the road; and hills and headwinds are easier.

The Green Centre      [www.zerowastemann.org](http://www.zerowastemann.org)  
Chester Street Centre      [www.meac.iofm.net](http://www.meac.iofm.net)  
Douglas      [www.foe.org.im](http://www.foe.org.im)  
IM1 2PG

Opening Hours: Saturdays 10.00 am - 2.00 pm  
(Although often open till 4.00 pm)

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## Campaigning for the Island's environment

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So what is net metering? It is the method of feeding electricity generated by a small home power generation system (solar, wind, hydro etc) into the MEA electricity grid and recovering that power at some later time. Net metering is like loaning the spare power you generate to the grid then recovering it later when insufficient locally generated power is available. You pay for the difference between the power exported to the grid and the power imported from the grid, i.e. the net amount used from the grid. This means any power recovered from the grid has been bought and resold to the home generator at the full sales rate, presently 12.44p/unit.

A special meter is fitted by the MEA (at a cost of approx. £200). As with all electricity meters there is a standing charge (charged on a per day basis) for a net meter system. Presently this is approximately £50 p.a. The net meter standing charge is in addition to the ordinary domestic meter standing charge of approximately £42 p.a.

Net metering is calculated on a quarter basis (i.e. every 3 months). If during the quarter more energy is exported than is used then the excess generated energy is purchased by the MEA at the sales rate in the tariff sheet (3.58p/unit at present).

It is this last condition that gives rise to the general confusion and the incorrect statement the MEA will only pay 2 to 3 pence for electric generated and supplied to the grid. Incorrect because this payment only applies to excess electricity sold to the MEA and the amount paid for this excess power is 3.58p/unit at the present time.

So is net metering a good tariff? The answer is yes. It provides a simple method of enabling small home generation systems to operate without the need for batteries and the complexity of dual wiring (one circuit for the MEA mains and another separate circuit for the battery sourced power). The MEA are therefore providing a good modern service that is on a par with and, in some cases, better than that available in the UK.

Could the MEA do better? Yes, the standing charge could be removed which would then allow smaller (less than say 200W) systems to use net metering. The cost of the standing charge penalizes very small systems but is acceptable for medium and larger systems. Also a similar system could be introduced for small businesses and farms. This would encourage the installation of more renewable energy generation thereby reducing the IOM dependence on imported fossil fuels. Let's be generous though, the Home Generator net meter tariff is a positive system that is little used at present but it is being explored by greater numbers of consumers all the time.

Fincher, MEAC

Article by George

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## How to Win Friends and Influence People

You've seen something that needs doing. You've had a bright idea to improve the environment. "Why don't they..?" you say to yourself, or to your family. We all do it over the breakfast table. But if we really want to change things and pass on our ideas we need to know who to get in touch with.

The Isle of Man has several layers of government and it is not always clear who is responsible for what. We might complain about the traffic only to find that the Department of Transport is not responsible for the buses, trains and trams. We might contact our local authority only to be told, 'DLGE deals with that.'

### Getting To Know your MHK

The House of Keys is made up of 24 members. They are democratically elected to represent the people who live in their constituency. Find out which MHK represents you. They make the laws and discuss national affairs. Their names are on page 39 of the Phone Book and on the government website [www.gov.im](http://www.gov.im)

Some MHKs have posts in the government. They may be Ministers in charge of a department or members within departments. For example John

Shimmin MHK is Minister for the Environment and Phil Ganne MHK is in charge of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

### How to Influence Your MHK

This is relatively easy on the Isle of Man

- Write to them
- Email them
- Ask to meet them
- Tell them what your organisation is doing
- Meet them at their local 'surgery'
- Find out what their interests are

But please don't bother your MHK with minor affairs that can be dealt with through your local authority.