

Reading Friends of the Earth



**Friends of
the Earth**

Newsletter Jan/Feb 2011

For more information see <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading>
email info@readingfoe.org.uk or 'phone 0118 9868260.

Diary:

General Meetings: Reading FoE usually meets on the second Wednesday of each month upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 8:00 p.m.

January 12th: – 8:00 p.m. at RISC – General Meeting

February 9th: - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – 'Jeremy wouldn't like it: the case for a 55mph speed limit' – visiting speaker Daniel from Green Speed – more details to e-mail list nearer the time.

Other Activities and Meetings (not run by Reading FoE):

Wednesday 2nd February – Transport Users' Forum – Reading Borough Council, Civic Offices, 6:30 p.m.

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Carbon Budgets

In early December Chris arranged a meeting with Councillors Andrew Cumpsty and Kirsten Bayes, the leaders of Reading's ruling coalition, at which national FoE campaigner Quentin Givern made the case for local carbon budgets. He asked for Reading's support for the national FoE initiative to include enabling legislation for this in the Energy Security and Green Economy Bill <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/energyhl.html>

Both Councillors appeared well-informed and committed to tackling climate change locally but said they would have to seek agreement from their colleagues before committing the Council to the initiative. We hope to hear from them early in the new year.

Many councils are now taking climate change very seriously, adopting ambitious local targets and rolling out strategies that are creating green jobs, cutting fuel poverty, and reducing traffic, but most councils are being left behind. The challenge of climate change is too grave and urgent to be left to those councils that choose to prioritise action. A nationwide system is needed to support councils and ensure emissions come down in every local authority area.

Local budgets would allow councils to negotiate for funds for measures that will work in their areas because different actions should be given priority in different places.

How Bad are Bananas? – the Carbon Footprint of everything

This book was given as a prize to each member of the winning team in GREN's AGM Quiz – 'The Other Coalition' of Reading Green Party with help from Reading FoE and Reading University managed to win the day.

Mike Berners-Lee's book reviews the climate change impact of 'everything' from sending a text message up to a small nuclear war. It concludes that bananas are 'brilliant' because they are grown in natural sunlight and transported by sea. It is quite strong on the climate impacts of foods – reinforcing the importance of FoE's 'fix the food chain' campaign – http://www.foe.co.uk/what_we_do/fix_food_chain_20576.html - pointing out the importance of methane and nitrous oxide contributing to the footprint of beef, lamb and dairy products.

At a UK level the author talks of a 10 tonne CO₂-e lifestyle (down from 15 tonnes) as a 'modest aspirational target that most people could meet' soon – while admitting that many experts believe we should aim for 3 tonnes each (i.e. an 80% reduction). A chilling conclusion is that if 4 billion people die by 2100 as a result of unmitigated climate change then 150 tonnes CO₂-e (i.e. ten years of an individual's typical UK emissions) costs one life.

The book gives carbon footprints of many items and makes comparisons – taking a daily paper for a year is equivalent to flying one-way from London to Madrid – a new Range Rover costs 3.5 years' of a 10-tonne lifestyle – etc.. It goes beyond this to work out financial costs for various carbon-saving measures – upgrading the loft insulation is about 60 times more cost-effective than fitting photovoltaic solar panels.

Local Transport Plan

Our comments on the Borough's draft third Local Transport Plan (LTP) which sets out 'challenges' for the period from 2011 to 2026 are at http://www.anjoro.plus.com/RFOE/LTP3_RFoE.doc. The intention is that rolling three-year action plans will be produced but we have not yet seen the first of these.

LTP3 identifies an increase in demand for travel of 15% by 2026 but does not say if or how this will be met, what measures will be taken to manage this demand, and what the environmental, economic or social consequences of different levels and modes of travel will be. The document lists many possible measures but seems very short of analysis of their costs and likely effects, so it's hard to see how the Council will formulate an effective action plan.

At the Transport Users Forum it was said that there had been 11 responses to the consultation from organisations and 10 from individuals – a number of respondents were surprised that the draft was not more 'anti-car'.

Feed In Tariffs (or Clean Energy Cashback):

Feed In Tariffs are a Government-backed scheme to incentivise small scale low carbon electricity generation. <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/business/Business/Local-Authorities/Funding/Feed-in-Tariffs>

GREM held a meeting on 23rd November, with a speaker from the Energy Saving Trust, to promote FiTs and energy saving for community and faith groups. Over 30 people from 20 organisations attended and had the basics of PV and FiTs explained. They also heard positive presentations about energy saving at the Friends Meeting House (including provision of quilts!) and proposals for Park United Reform Church which is going for solar PV and a biomass boiler.

Rushy Mead Turbines:

It is thought likely that the planning application will be decided by the Wokingham Planning Committee in March 2011 - see http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Rushy_Mead.doc.

Council in pioneering work on Ground-Source Heat-Pumps – and buses

Reading Borough Council announced that it is the only local authority in Britain to benefit from £100,000 worth of funding for 'Geo.Power' - a European funded programme which enables partners to work together on the introduction of 'ground source' heat pumps.

Reading Borough Council will be bringing to the table a number of installations which are already up and running in Reading, including at the Avenue Centre on the Meadway and at Prospect School.

Reading Borough Council will now be working closely with the other partners on the two-year European funded programme to share technology and experiences. At the end of the two years all the work will be pulled together to set out a way forward as to how more ground source heat pumps could be installed to help reduce carbon emissions across Europe and benefit from the new Renewable Heat Incentive from the Government to be announced next year.

Another initiative announced in December was the move towards hybrid-drive buses for the bus company – currently on route yellow 26 from Reading to Calcot. Hybrid drive buses are said to save about 30% of the fuel. See link at <http://www.reading-buses.co.uk/files/documents/Leaflets/hybrid%20technology%20WEB.pdf>

No Need for Nuclear:

<http://www.noneedfornuclear.org.uk/> is a campaign endorsed by FoE, Greenpeace, etc. to campaign for intelligent energy policy in the UK. The website includes links to much detailed information and arguments.

An initial aim is to get MPs to sign EDM 557 which calls for an inquiry into new nuclear power stations: "That this House notes that if new nuclear power stations are built they will not come into operation before 2019 and so cannot in any way assist with the energy gap that Ofgem has said may arise in 2015; notes too that as regards to long-term electricity needs the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) wrote to the Sustainable Energy Partnership on 10 December 2009 that 'DECC has not made any long-term projections of electricity demand/supply' and that 'our latest projections were published up to 2022...and DECC is developing scenarios of potential electricity demand/supply to 2050 but don't have any definite figures for this yet'; further notes from statements made by the Government that it has already decided that new nuclear power stations are needed to satisfy future demand for electricity; believes that this is a wholly perverse way of making policy, whereby large infrastructure is built before an assessment of the long-term need for it has been made; and therefore calls on the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change to suspend any decision to build new nuclear power stations and to commence immediately a parliamentary and public investigation into the need for new nuclear power stations and related matters including their cost, their effect on electricity prices and on fuel bills, and on whether they, or the alternatives to nuclear, are the best ways to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and to create jobs in the energy sector."

Useful Websites etc.:

www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk
www.foe.co.uk

GREN - Greater Reading Environmental Network <http://www.gren.org.uk/>.

Transition Reading - Reading's Transition Town movement
<http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/>

Doorstep collection of WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) service in Reading being offered by Midex Reverse Technologies <http://www.midex-rt.com/>

True Food Co-op: www.truefood.coop now with new shop in Emmer Green!

Reading Borough Council Waste and Recycling:
<http://www.reading.gov.uk/environmentandplanning/wasteandrecycling/>

South East Forum for Sustainability: <http://www.sefs.org.uk>

Citizens Committee on Oil Peak And Decline (COPAD) www.copad.org

<http://www.fishonline.org/> gives info on over-fishing, fish to avoid, etc.

www.ejfoundation.org (Environmental Justice Foundation)

Local Food Directory, with links: http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk/Local_Economy.htm

RISC <http://www.risc.org.uk/readingfairtrade/>

Reading FoE Officers

At our 2010 AGM on April 14th Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were elected to the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively.

Reading FoE e-mail communications

If you would like to be on our main mailing list and join in our day-to-day communications please email info@readingfoe.org.uk.

Alternatively we have a separate list for people who only want to receive our newsletter and information about important events and actions.

Reading FoE Subscriptions – Subscribe NOW for 2010/11

To join or renew, just fill in the slip below and send it off with your subscription. We aim to provide a regular newsletter to keep members up to date with the group's activities. Our subscriptions run from April to March and are set at £7.00 / £4.00 (waged / unwaged) to cover newsletter costs, meeting room hire and campaign expenses. Further contributions would be greatly appreciated.

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Please tick if you are able to take an active part in our campaigns. We may contact you by phone.

I heard about the group from: _____

Please make your cheque payable to Reading Friends of the Earth, and return to the Reading FoE Treasurer, c/o 27 Instow Road, Earley, Reading RG6 5QH.