

Reading Friends of the Earth Newsletter Jan/Feb 2013



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

Diary:

General Meetings: Reading FoE usually meets on the second Wednesday of each month upstairs in Room 1 at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 8:00 p.m. Most meetings include discussion of general topics – some have a particular focus or guest speakers.

January 9th: – 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – likely to cover Bee Cause and Clean British Energy campaigns and preparation for 'Sudden Colony Collective' and University 'Green Fayre' events – see below.

February 13th: - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – topics later by e-mail to the list.

Other Reading FoE Activities and Meetings:

Saturday January 26th – 'Sudden Colony Collective' – evening to very late in Global Cafe at RISC. Following the very successful event in September (see last newsletter) another evening of music, poetry and entertainment in support of our BeeCause campaign. Small charge on door. Final details in progress – will be posted on www.readingfoe.org.uk when available.

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

Saturday 12th January – Draught Busting – Transition Town Reading are starting a practical initiative to enable some of the most vulnerable in our town, who are in the worst energy poverty, to live in draught free homes. Training and information seminar for would-be participants. RISC – 13:00 to 15:00.

Monday 11th February - Reading University 'Green Fayre' – we intend to have a stall featuring FoE's work at this event which is aiming to raise awareness of saving energy, water and fuel among the student population. Between 12 and 2pm in 3Sixty, Reading University Students' Union,

Green Drinks at RISC - is on the first Tuesday of every month. Come along to the Global Café from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m. to meet like-minded people for a chat over a drink or two. <http://www.greendrinks.org/berkshire/reading>

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Clean British Energy:

This campaign is moving on to more work around the Energy Bill which is currently going through Parliament.

There is a detailed briefing http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/energy_bill_2nd_reading.pdf from FoE, WWF, Greenpeace, ACE & RSPB which calls for changes to the Bill, in particular for inclusion of a decarbonisation target for 2030 to ensure that progress is in line with the 2050 target, and for electricity saving to be at the heart of the Bill.

While Chancellor George Osborne and other Conservative MPs seem happy to promote 'fracking' for shale gas and are mustering opposition to on-shore wind-farms Deutsche Bank and Pöyry have said shale will have a marginal impact on gas prices and on-shore wind costs continue to fall.

We ran a street stall in Broad Street on 24th November and despite the 'seasonal' weather we collected a few more signed postcards for our MPs.

Michael recommended the video'd lectures from the Centre for Alternative Technology as a good introduction to the energy debates. <http://blog.cat.org.uk/2012/11/29/podcast-how-should-we-meet-our-energy-needs/>

More Flowers for Reading's Bees

Veronica Leeke represented us at a meeting at the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) where they are making preparations to plant a bee garden, to stage an open day for the public, council members and interested groups, and to take part in the 60 Bee Worlds initiative

<http://forum.foe.co.uk/campaignhubs/index.php?action=media;sa=album;in=76> .

MERL have designed and will be planting up the bee-friendly garden, with the help of lottery funding and volunteers, and that should be done by the end of May next year and will include flowering vegetables as well. They also have other existing bee-friendly areas where lavender is growing at the front of the building. We hope that the planting will meet the criteria for the FOE Bee World initiative even though the proposed garden yet to be planted up will only be in place for one year.

MERL are expecting to host an open day when the garden comes into fruition, in July or August 2013, which will coincide with the school holidays, and they are keen to borrow a FOE bee costume for it. I had taken along the promotional material I still have from FOE head office that would be useful for the event, particularly the children's project leaflets, and they were pleased that they could order these instead of having to design their own material.

Water Issues:

John Booth took part in Reading Borough Council's Water Security Scrutiny meeting in November and submitted two papers with help from Helena Wright. Unfortunately the Environment Agency (EA) were too busy dealing with Floods to attend but they and Thames Water (TW) were among the other parties to submit evidence.

Papers are at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/meetings/details/3551/>. The EA has clarified the statement on carbon footprint of water in its paper - 89% of CO2 emissions from using water in the home relate to heating it in the home, and only 11% are from the external water supply side (pumping, treating the water, waste water treatment etc). Citing a paper from the Energy Saving Trust <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Publications2/Housing-professionals/Heating-systems/Quantifying-the-energy-and-carbon-effects-of-water-saving-summary-report>

Professor Arnell from Reading University showed that monthly rainfall patterns have been very variable in recent years and predicted higher temperatures, more variation, and changes in reliability of river flows in the years to come.

Thames Water did not explain the management of the aquifer in any detail – perhaps it is too complex an issue for a public meeting? No-one presented analysis of what sort of rainfall patterns are needed to replenish the aquifer or the likelihood of experiencing such rainfall in the future.

Thames Water gave the impression that reducing demand by water-efficiency measures was a good thing to do and they do offer free advice and gadgets for home-owners. However they did not argue the case for it strongly or advocate particular targets. They say their 25-year plans have been approved to provide a defined level of service - which includes sprinkler bans one year in ten and 'Temporary Use Ban' (hosepipe ban) one year in twenty on average - and that consumers are reluctant to pay more to reduce the frequency of application of these restrictions.

We asked the Environment Agency why they propose a target level of consumption of 105 litres per person per day when lower targets appear feasible – 80 litres per person per day is required by Code for Sustainable Homes levels 5 and 6.

They replied that "Building new homes to a water efficiency standard of 105l/h/d is very easy to achieve at little cost (as little as £125 per home), as it can be achieved through water efficient fixtures, fittings and appliances. To achieve level 5/6 of the CFSH with a water efficiency target of 80l/h/d requires significantly more investment with the application of rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling, and this often makes the costs outweigh the benefits in residential properties. Use of these systems in large industrial or office buildings is often much more cost effective given the space available to harvest rainfall and install treatment systems for grey water."

Without any cost-benefit analysis of doing more, or less, to reduce demand or increase supply, it is not possible to form a judgement on what water-saving measures Reading should take through its planning controls and what improvements to supply it should advocate via Ofwat or the EA.

On a separate issue we asked the national FoE Land Use, Food and Water team about the '38 degrees' campaign on the 'Super Sewer' <http://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/stop-the-thames-water-rip-off> which may increase water bills for everyone in Thames Water's area. FoE say their London campaigner is working on opposition to the super sewer.

Climate Change Strategy Revision.

The revision of the Reading Climate Change Strategy to run from 2013 to 2020 is progressing. Public consultation was launched at the beginning of November and ran until 14th December. Summary and links to full documents are on <https://www.snapsurveys.com/swh/surveylogin.asp?k=135003822252>

At our December meeting we reviewed the strategy and comments on each chapter were submitted via the website – key observations were that:

- Meeting national targets was unlikely to be enough to restrain global temperature rise to 2°C so the Climate Change Partnership should lobby for more ambitious national and international targets - .
- The intention to deliver the strategy by a 'Community of Action' and 3-year rolling Action Plans rolled forward each year should be flagged much earlier in the document and made more of.
- There should be a commitment to consult on the Action Plans.
- The suggestion that members of the Reading 'accord' who signed up to the Strategy should adopt a 34% emissions reduction target against their own baselines from whenever they chose is likely to confuse. One suggestion is that they should adopt targets to give a linear decline in emissions from now (or whenever they have a baseline) to zero in 2050 - another suggestion is that they should commit to monitoring and targeting their carbon emissions and debating their results with the 'accord'.

A full listing of the comments submitted will be made available on www.readingfoe.org.uk

Greater Reading Environmental Network AGM:

The GREN AGM in December was well-attended – the committee now consists of Michele Atkins (Secretary), Oonagh Kelleher (Treasurer), Rachel Miller, Tony Cowling, and John Booth. There is a vacancy for another committee member.

Green Electricity Tariffs:

In November there was some discussion on our e-mail list as to whether (when moving house or renewing heating systems) we should stop buying gas and switch instead to renewable electricity (from someone like GoodEnergy [100% - renewable]). On one side it was argued that 100% renewable electricity was the only acceptable low-carbon option and buying it encouraged creation of more capacity. On the other that in the short term this would increase electricity use from carbon-intensive sources by other people because there was not enough renewable capacity, so it was better to use gas and invest the money saved in increasing renewable supplies for the future.

One official source which may be helpful to people tackling these questions (but does not provide all the answers) is the "Staying Connected Energy Consumer Checklist" which is available at <http://www.ecotricity.co.uk/customer-service/the-legal-stuff/know-your-rights> and includes links to advice on Green Energy <http://www.greenenergyscheme.org/> among other information.

Housing Minister calls to build on 3% more of UK and opposes windfarms:

Housing Minister Nick Boles declared last year that another 3% of the countryside should be built on in the next 20 years.

He was quoted in the Mail Online as saying:

“The fact is – and I am critical of the last government’s immigration policies – we allowed the population of this country to expand dramatically. The population of England has gone up by two million in the last ten years. These people now live here, these people are now British and they need homes just like other British people. 43 per cent of the new households which want a home, is accounted for by immigration. We can’t go on like this. We need to have less immigration and more house-building and we might then have a civilised country.”

In response CPRE and others called for priority to be given to redevelopment of brownfield sites <http://www.cpre.org.uk/media-centre/latest-news-releases/item/3152-nick-boles-wrong-on-housing-wrong-on-the-countryside>. Population Matters commented that “We need the land we have for agriculture as population growth worldwide strains food supplies. Britain also increasingly struggles to ensure consistent energy and water supplies for its citizens.” <http://www.populationmatters.org/2012/blog/planning-minister-barks-wrong-tree/>

This year Mr. Boles has written to the Energy Minister John Hayes to say that people opposed to onshore wind farms should not have their views “ridden over roughshod”.

According to the Daily Telegraph:

“Nick Boles told John Hayes, a fellow Conservative, that “local people have genuine concerns” and “wind farms are not appropriate in all settings”.

“The Daily Telegraph has been told that Mr Boles warned Mr Hayes in the letter that people “bitterly resented” having onshore wind farm developments imposed on them by planners after an inquiry.”

“The intervention will be a major boost for communities which are fighting the construction of turbines near their homes. It is also the first evidence of a Tory ministerial alliance against Liberal Democrat attempts to introduce more onshore wind turbines.”

“Mr Boles is looking to build an informal alliance against wind turbines with Mr Hayes, a near constituency neighbour, without having to get agreement from Ed Davey, the Lib Dem Climate Change Secretary.”

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/>

Pangbourne and Whitchurch Sustainability Group (PAWS) <http://www.pawsg.com/>

True Food Co-op: www.truefood.coop - Winner Best Retail Initiative BBC Food & Farming Awards 2011 - shop in Emmer Green and local markets!

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

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 AGM on April 11th 2012 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 2012/13

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 £8.00 / £5.00 (waged / unwaged) to cover newsletter costs, meeting room hire and campaign expenses. Further contributions would be greatly appreciated. Even if you don't have time to take an active part, your support is welcome and allows us to demonstrate more local support.

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.