

Reading Friends of the Earth Newsletter Jan/Feb 2016



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

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. Meetings are open to all.

January 13th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – discussing 'Smart M4', climate change, etc., etc.

February 10th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – discussion of current campaign areas – details by e-mail.

Other Activities (not run by Reading FoE):

Thursday 14th January – Civic Offices 18:30 – **Transport Users Forum** – expect to include a question from Tanja about LEDs ... <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/4451/AllPapers-Public/pdf/AllPapers-Public.pdf>

Saturday 16th January – Abingdon 12:30 to 18:30 - **Review of Paris Climate Talks and future plans**– book on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/events/182992592046576/>

Saturday 20th February – **Repair Cafe** – at Whitley Community Cafe with WhitleyBig Local. 9am - 12:30pm.
<https://www.facebook.com/ReadingRepairCafe/?fref=ts>

Friday 29th January – **This Changes Everything** – 19:30 - film show at RISC Global Café - an epic attempt to re-imagine the vast challenge of climate change inspired by Naomi Klein – Global Justice Now -
<https://www.facebook.com/events/996714413721981/>

Saturday 30th January – **Climate Rising** – London – see Page 3 below.

Monday 8th February – Café Scientifique – **Towards Sustainable Cocoa Production** - Smokin' Billy's (formerly Monroe's) 61 St Mary's Butts, Reading, at 19:30

Tuesday 23rd February – UoR Lecture - Prof. R. Ellis – **Feeding the World** - Prof. R. Ellis on managing crop production - Agriculture Building at 19:00 – book at www.reading.ac.uk/events

Green Drinks at RISC – usually 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>

(Advance Notice) **Monday 14th March** – **Great Debate: Can Renewables meet our Electricity Needs?** – UoR – book on link <http://www.reading.ac.uk/15/about/newsandevents/Events/Event659696.aspx>

Smart M4 Updates:

On 16th November we took part in the 'Open Floor Hearing' in Reading. A group of protesters co-ordinated by Reading FoE demonstrated outside.



At the meeting John and Enrico gave evidence as did a number of local Councillors, politicians and other members of the public.

The Examining Panel heard a variety of concerns about noise, traffic and pollution with the scheme. Margaret Cocks gave a good presentation on noise in Lower Earley and this issue was also raised by others. David Green – a retired transport engineer – gave convincing evidence on congestion and traffic growth and modelling.

There was useful coverage in local media:

<http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/local-news/smart-m4-lower-earley-people-10455450>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-34834729>

Smart M4 Continued:

The examination continued in the week to 20th November with hearings near Heathrow on environmental and safety issues where staff members Naomi Lude-Thompson (planning campaigner) and Jenny Bates (air quality campaigner) gave evidence for Friends of the Earth and Chris Todd appeared for Campaign for Better Transport. John attended for Reading FoE and David Green and Earley politicians also attended and spoke.

Several of the local authorities were represented by staff (not Reading or Wokingham) and there was general concern over the accuracy of the traffic modelling and forecasting, which seemed to be at quite a high level and may therefore not have taken sufficient account of junction delays and congestion. Highways England appeared to be asserting that traffic would be diverted from trunk roads onto the widened motorway without causing congestion on approach roads and there would be less traffic growth than in national traffic forecasts.

There were two further 'Open Floor hearings' – one near Heathrow and one in Maidenhead – John went to the Maidenhead one with Rachel Cooke from Maidenhead FoE but it was rather poorly attended and largely focussed on matters associated with specific properties.

Written summaries of statements to the hearings can be found at <http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/south-east/m4-junctions-3-to-12-smart-motorway/?ipcsection=docs&stage=4&filter=Deadline+IV+-+26-11-2015>

The Examiners have now issued a second set of questions that Highways England must answer by 8th January. It is encouraging to see that some of the questions refer to issues we have raised. <http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010019/2.%20Post-Submission/Procedural%20Decisions/Examining%20Authority's%20second%20written%20questions.pdf>

For more information and background see www.readingfoe.org.uk/m4 (it will be updated soon, honest!).

Climate Change

Many Reading FoE members took part in the Reading Climate March on 28th November which was supported by about 200 people and achieved some media coverage. <http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/local-news/dozens-take-part-reading-peoples-10525145> ('dozens' really was an under-statement). At the closing rally there were good speeches from the Mayor of Reading and other worthies, experts, and concerned citizens.

Some Reading FoE people also went on the march in London on 29th November and some attended the Reading Climate Day events on 5th December which included a good talk by Professor John Mitchell, Principal Research Fellow at the Met Office, and a 'Climate Mass' with the Bishop of Reading officiating and a sermon from environmental theologian Dr Ruth Valerio.

The analysis of the COP21 Climate Talks in Paris will run and run. FoE accept there is a long way to go still but have posted <https://www.foe.co.uk/blog/5-reasons-be-optimistic-about-climate-change> five 'reasons to be cheerful'.

Kevin Anderson, Professor of energy and climate change in the School of Mechanical, Aeronautical and Civil Engineering at the University of Manchester, formerly director of the Tyndall Centre, was similarly encouraged but overall perhaps more pessimistic.

He wrote it was "a genuine triumph of international diplomacy assiduous and painstaking science ultimately defeated the unremitting programme of misinformation by powerful vested interests. The international community not only acknowledged the seriousness of climate change, but demonstrated sufficient unanimity to quantitatively define it: to hold *"the increase in ... temperature to well below 2°C ... and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C"*."

However he was particularly concerned that fossil fuel use would not be reduced quickly enough and that governments would come to rely on BECCS (biomass energy carbon capture and storage) as the most promising *"negative emission technology"* which would require "decades of ongoing planting and harvesting of energy crops over an area the size of one to three times that of India."

He commented that if the Paris 2°C goal was sacrosanct

- "A 30% reduction in global emissions could be delivered in under a year, simply by constraining the emissions of that 10% responsible for half of all global CO₂ to the level of a typical European." ...and
- "Whilst the headline goals of the Paris Agreement are to be welcomed, the five year review timeframe eliminates any serious chance of maintaining emissions within even carbon budgets for a slim chance of 2°C."

<http://kevinanderson.info/blog/the-hidden-agenda-how-veiled-techno-utopias-shore-up-the-paris-agreement/>

Climate Rising – London 30th January:

This event in London on 30th January “is the perfect opportunity to come together after the Paris climate talks and get energised to build a bigger and more diverse climate movement in 2016”. A day of workshops, inspirational speakers, and updates from the Paris talks. Run by FoE, PCS and ‘This Changes Everything’. 09:00 to 17:30 - Friends House - 173-177 Euston Road London NW1 2AX – pre-booking by 29th January essential – cost £6. <https://www.foe.co.uk/page/climate-rising>

Extreme Weather:

At our December meeting we had a presentation from Chris Beales on Extreme Weather – primarily addressing rainfall, flooding, and temperature in SE England. He presented a fascinating array of statistics with the message that weather is extremely variable year-to-year and that there is local evidence of higher temperatures in recent decades. <http://chrisbeales.net/environment/extreme%20events.html>

Bee Cause:

Evidence is building that neonicotinoids are getting to pollinators from wild flowers that can have pesticide concentrations about 8 times higher than in the adjacent crops.

The Soil Association has a good ‘infographic’ at <http://www.soilassociation.org/banneonics>

Newbury Bypass Protest 20th Anniversary:

The ‘Third Battle of Newbury’ started 20 years ago and there has been good local media coverage of the anniversary <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-35132815>. 1996 was after the road protests at Twyford Down and before climate change became a key issue. Southampton port was expanded to take more freight, the rail link was closed in the 1960s, Oxford was bypassed, and so Newbury was the blockage on the A34.

We should be thankful for all the people – including ‘Reading Roadbusters’ - who protested against damage to wildlife and the countryside and the massive programme of road expansion. As the BBC report says “In the 20 years since the bypass was built, only two significant new roads have been created in this part of England: the Hindhead tunnel on the A3, and the Weymouth Relief Road.”

Friends of the Earth nationally and in Newbury were very active in support of the protesters in the 1990s. In 2006 they publicised figures showing that traffic growth had far exceeded expectations and traffic in the town was nearing pre-bypass levels https://www.foe.co.uk/resource/press_releases/10_years_on_newbury_bypass_09012006

Nuclear Information Service:

NIS has recently moved its office to RISC. They are currently working on a new report which will give some clarity and detail on current structure and plans at AWE (Atomic Weapons Establishment) in nearby Aldermaston. The report also looks ahead to a future where all nuclear weapons have been banned and considers potential diversification and re-deployment scenarios for AWE and the thousands of people who work there. Their website is at <http://www.nuclearinfo.org/>. People are invited to sign up for their [newsletter](#) to stay in touch.

Air Quality:

Reading FoE will be commenting on the Council’s proposed update of its Air Quality Strategy – follow links on <http://www.reading.gov.uk/consultations> - that it contains no detail of how bad the situation is at present, no estimates of future levels of pollution, and no analysis of the proposed actions to show whether they will be successful ... so it’s hard to tell what should be done and where. It’s questionable whether proposed actions to address congestion will improve air quality or whether traffic will increase to fill the space available.

Dr. John Walker’s presentation advocating Road Pricing to the Transport Users Forum on 3rd November identified climate change and public health among the potential benefits and led to many questions and discussion.

Meanwhile a Reading Professor is joining a panel to tackle air pollution in Hammersmith and Fulham <https://t.co/TSWS28SUhZ>

Cycling in Broad Street:

The recent ‘informal consultation’ by the Council had 1,283 responses of which 62% were in favour of allowing cycling throughout the route which provides a direct link from King’s Road to Oxford Road. There will probably now be a formal consultation.

FoE Roundup of 2015:

Many national FOE subscribers will have received this already by e-mail ... but for those who haven’t it’s a description of 14 successes on topics from fracking to wildlife and Ebola.

<http://foe.us6.list-manage.com/track/click?u=2025520aace5b8eab03720707&id=681df2b314&e=aa4cf008c8>

Useful Websites etc.:

Friends of the Earth 'England, Wales and Northern Ireland' <http://www.foe.co.uk>

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

Reading Climate Action Network - <http://www.readingclimateaction.org.uk/>

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

Reading Sustainability Centre - <http://readingsustainabilitycentre.co.uk/>

Action AWE (Atomic Weapons Eradication) is a grassroots campaign of nonviolent actions dedicated to halting nuclear weapons production at the Atomic Weapons Establishment factories at Aldermaston and Burghfield.
<http://actionawe.org/>

Greenlink Berkshire www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk

True Food Co-op: www.truefood.coop - shop in Emmer Green.

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)

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

Reading FoE Officers

At our AGM on April 8th 2015 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 receive and join in our day-to-day communications please send an email to 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 2015/16

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.