

# Reading Friends of the Earth

## Newsletter Jan/Feb 2017

For more information: <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading> or [www.readingfoe.org.uk](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk)  
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### Diary:

**General Meetings:** Reading FoE usually meets on the **second Wednesday of each month** in Room 1 upstairs 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 11<sup>th</sup>** - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – probably some focus on transport and air quality and preparation for 'Call for Compassion' on 20th.

**February 8<sup>th</sup>** - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – topics and details by e-mail.

**March 8<sup>th</sup>** – 7:30 p.m. at RISC – we will be sharing a meeting in 'Fair Trade Fortnight' with Global Justice Now - so at an earlier time. Speaker and topic tba but probably issues around tax dodging or divestment from fossil fuels.

### Other Activities with Reading FoE:

**"Call for Compassion" - Friday 20<sup>th</sup> January** - 6:00 to 7:00 pm at Queen Victoria's Statue (outside Old Town Hall) – a local gathering with banners and torches on the day of Donald Trump's inauguration to show support for Equality, Peace and Environmental Justice – see text below. This is an independently-organised event which we are supporting.

**Saturday, February 11<sup>th</sup>** – **South East Regional Gathering** – don't know where, don't know when ... yet ... This is a chance for Friends of the Earth Local Groups in the South East to get together, share ideas and get up to date on the latest campaigns. Opportunity to bring along other local allies - this is all about building the power of the South East environmental movement! Contact: Laura McFarlane-Shopes [laura.mcfarlane-shopes@foe.co.uk](mailto:laura.mcfarlane-shopes@foe.co.uk)

### Other Activities (not run by Reading FoE):

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> January** 12:00 to 4:30 - **Repair Cafe** rLab, C1 Weldale Street, RG1 [www.readingrepaircafe.org.uk](http://www.readingrepaircafe.org.uk) (probably also Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> February but no details yet).

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January** 7:30 – Room 3 at RISC - "**Reading's water supply in a changing world**". This is a repeat of the Reading Climate Forum talk from 4<sup>th</sup> November. Chris Beales, a local hydrologist, and Michael Bright, a water industry consultant, will talk about how Reading gets its water, water efficiency, and the related challenges we expect to face from our changing climate.

**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February** 7:30 – 8:30 - **eWater technology in Gambia** – using mobile phone technology to monitor and pay for clean water use in Africa - The eWATERtap is NFC enabled (like the Oyster card) and allows the tap to operate by deducting prepaid credit from the NFC tag. Event at The Warehouse (1a Cumberland Road, RG1 3HL) with free dinner and parking available. Engineers Without Borders <http://www.ewb-uk.org/> - contact [reading.rn@ewb-uk.org](mailto:reading.rn@ewb-uk.org)

**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>

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### Call for Compassion – Reading 20<sup>th</sup> January *Tanja Rebel writes:*

On the 20th of January, Donald Trump will be inaugurated as President of the USA. Trump's Presidency will pose a direct threat to the Environment, Human Rights and Equality. His political appointments have made this clear, consisting mainly of climate change deniers and fossil fuel cronies including the CEO of Exxon Mobil, Rex Tillerson, as Secretary of State.

Failure to address Climate Change will hit the poorest and most vulnerable around the world first and foremost. In the US, Hurricane Katrina, Standing Rock and the Flint water crisis have shown how people of colour and indigenous

communities are disproportionately affected by climate change and are treated as 'sacrifice zones' for the fossil fuel industry as well as other environmental polluters. The same applies on a global scale: Trump has threatened to pull the US out of the Paris Agreement. If he manages, scientists warn that this could push us over the 2 Degrees limit, endangering the lives of millions of humans and animals. This would amount to Genocide and Ecocide on a hitherto unimaginable scale.

Activists in the US have called for protests on the day of Trump's inauguration and there will be many demonstrations in towns and cities across the world that day. We are proud to announce that Reading will be one of them: There will be a Call for Compassion by the Queen Victoria Statue between 6 and 7pm where people will make a stand against racism, sexism, violation of human rights, climate change denial and environmental destruction. Instead they will advocate Equality, Peace and Environmental Justice.

The event is supported by Friends of the Earth Reading, Climate Change Centre Reading, Global Justice Now Reading and Reading Peace Group. It is hoped that many people will come to express their wish for a better world.

**Please bring a warm colour temperature torch. In times of darkness let's **Light A Light!****

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See also events in London on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/events/530573527151486/> and on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/womensmarchlondon>

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### **Air Quality – Focus on Reading!**

As well as members of Reading FoE a number of people in GREN are interested in air quality in Reading so we formed a collaborative group and invited Jenny Bates – FoE's Air Pollution Campaigner - to speak at the GREN AGM on 28<sup>th</sup> November.

**Measurements:** In October we had measured particulate concentrations in various locations using portable 'SidePak' equipment on loan from national FoE which was supposed to measure PM2.5 – the smallest and most insidious of particulate pollutants. We discovered that readings varied widely from place to place and time to time (and probably with weather conditions) – particularly high levels were seen at the rail station drop-off point and at a location just north of the M4. However we concluded that the equipment as supplied did not give us absolutely accurate readings for PM2.5 so we were unable to reach any firm assessment of risk or comparison with standards.

We did discover that the only local location where PM2.5 are measured by the authorities is right in the middle of the cemetery at Cemetery Junction and some distance from any road – rightly designated 'urban background'. Annual average for this site in 2013 was just on the EU guide level for this pollutant so it is likely that sites nearer roads will exceed the guide level.

FoE's campaign is moving to support 'citizen science' efforts to monitor NO2 levels in key locations. We expect to receive 10 Diffusion Tubes to deploy in the near future.

**Media interest:** In mid-November there was media interest because (following the High Court judgement against the government for non-compliance with EU targets in early November) Environment Minister, Dr Therese Coffey MP, wrote to Reading Borough Council (RBC) suggesting they should do more to reduce pollutant levels in its designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMS) to comply with targets. RBC's response was on the lines that Reading was a thriving economy. John was interviewed on both BBC TV South Today and Radio Berkshire, pointing out that Nottingham was raising £9 million per year for better transport from a Workplace Parking Levy – a point discussed at length on Radio Berkshire the following day.

**Council to act on idling:** Reading Borough Council proposals to discourage idling engines were discussed at Strategic Environmental Planning and Transport Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> November [http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/6353/Item09-Idling-Nov16-Report-to-SEPT/pdf/Item09\\_Idling\\_Nov16\\_Report\\_to\\_SEPT.pdf](http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/6353/Item09-Idling-Nov16-Report-to-SEPT/pdf/Item09_Idling_Nov16_Report_to_SEPT.pdf) A webcast of the meeting can be seen at [http://player.companywebcast.com/readingboroughcouncil/20161123\\_1/nl/player](http://player.companywebcast.com/readingboroughcouncil/20161123_1/nl/player). As with many Council initiatives on this topic this seems a good idea in principle but no analysis of its likely effectiveness was presented.

**GREN Air Quality Meeting:** At the GREN AGM on 28<sup>th</sup> November FoE Air Pollution campaigner Jenny Bates introduced the Healthy Air Campaign website - <http://www.healthyair.org.uk/> - which has a lot of useful links, and pointed out that poor air quality had both long and short-term effects – in particular children's lungs could be under-developed.

She said that the WHO said there were no safe limits for PM2.5, and that Defra had identified Reading/Wokingham Urban Area as a key 'Agglomeration Zone' of concern in its 2011 "Air quality plan for the achievement of EU air quality limit values for nitrogen dioxide (NO2) in the UK".

After its defeat in the High Court by Client Earth the government will have to speed up action on NO2 – the five proposed 'Clean Air Zones' should become at least 15 and should place restrictions on all diesel-powered vehicles not just large ones – proposing to achieve targets by 2020 and 2025 was not good enough - cost was irrelevant to the legal requirement.

As well as cleaner vehicles there should be fewer vehicles – brake and tyre wear contribute to particulates and congestion increases emissions from engines. In the longer term planning measures can increase accessibility by 'active' modes and public transport, and can restrict road-building and car parking provision.

FoE is running a petition calling on government to phase out diesel vehicles by 2025 – please sign it and circulate!  
<https://act.foe.co.uk/ditchdiesel>

John Oversby, Enrico and John Booth added some local detail including our results from SidePak measurements:

- Defra and the Council run four automatic monitoring stations for PM10 and NO2, but only one for PM2.5
- The Council also deployed quite a large number of diffusion tubes to measure long-term NO2 concentrations
- For NO2 in 2014 there were 30 sites where an exceedance of the 40µg/m3 annual mean was seen. A further 14 sites were indicating a borderline exceedance (>36µg/m3) in 2014.
- RBC say "Modelling indicates that Reading will be compliant with Nitrogen Dioxide targets by 2020."
- RBC say "The Corporate plan includes a key action to narrow the gap to the national average (5.3%) of deaths in over 25s linked to air pollution (PM2.5). (Reading figure is 5.9% of deaths)."
- Biggest impact on individual AQ seems to be cigarette smoking and may be related to equity issues.
- Need to consider non-fatal impacts on health.
- Air quality has larger impacts on economically and health deprived communities. We need more investigation of how poor air quality maps to less-well-off areas of Reading to optimise RBC plans for action.

**MPs put pressure on government:** The chair of the Environment and Rural Affairs Committee of MPs has written to the government to demand more urgent action to tackle air pollution after a court ruling rejected the adequacy of current plans to tackle the issue. The Committee called for a debate on the air quality crisis in cities after also finding the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Department for Transport had failed to act on the Committee's recommendations for tackling air pollution.

Committee chair Neil Parish, said: "November's High Court judgement was the second time that courts have ruled against the government's air pollution plans. My Committee's April report on air quality demanded urgent government action to tackle the public health emergency that's being driven by dirty diesel vehicles and heavy traffic.

#### **Climate Change – background information and links:**

A recent FoE blog <https://www.foe.co.uk/blog/free-energy-much-you-want-possibility-or-dream> reviews the prospects for renewable energy and concludes:

- "Renewable power is great, and it's tumbling in price. But the idea that it can replace the vast majority of the fossil fuel energy we use – in our homes, our businesses and our cars – and provide all the energy that is needed by people across the world in 'energy poverty' within just 15 years - is a stretch too far"
- "Instead we need to grow renewable energy as fast as we can, while simultaneously reducing energy use as much as we can. And we should share out what energy we have more fairly – that's if, like Friends of the Earth, you think we shouldn't live in a world where some people use masses of energy and many more don't have access to enough to even have their basic energy needs met."

University of Reading's Walker Institute report on 2016 is at <http://www.walker.ac.uk/news-events/> ... they seem to be doing a lot on rainfall and extreme events in Africa.

Real-time map showing the energy sources European nations are using to generate their electricity  
<http://electricitymap.tmrow.co/>

#### **GREN Events: Reading Climate Forum**

Greater Reading Environmental Network has been granted funds from Reading Climate Change Partnership to run a third series of 'Reading Climate Forum' events in the coming months. Likely to include a visit to UoR to look at their district heating, combined heat and power, and ground-sourced heat installations. Suggestions of other topics to John Booth please. For details of previous events see <http://chrisbeales.net/readingclimateforum/>

### **Heathrow Expansion and Climate Change – Suitcases needed by ‘Rising Up!’**

Rising Up! <http://risingup.org.uk/> ran another action consisting of “protests and acts of peaceful mischief” against Heathrow Expansion on 19<sup>th</sup> November – blocking access roads and achieving some publicity <http://metro.co.uk/2016/11/19/at-least-15-arrested-at-massive-die-in-protest-at-heathrow-over-airport-expansion-6269361/>. 15 people were arrested for obstructing the highway and public order offences of whom 12 have pleaded guilty and have been cautioned while three are going to trial.

For a future planned action they need **100 wheeled suitcases** so if you have one you can spare please contact Eleanor [ebp.pitts@gmail.com](mailto:ebp.pitts@gmail.com) urgently.

### **Reading Climate Change Partnership (RCCP) and Climate Change Strategy:**

The Partnership Board met on 25<sup>th</sup> November and discussed:

- Good progress against targets to reduce local emissions in Reading Borough Council's ‘Carbon Plan, 2015-2020’ - the 2015/16 carbon footprint for the Council's corporate activities is 36.9 % lower than the baseline emissions in 2008/09, 5.2 % ahead of target;
- The latest local area carbon footprint data (2014) which showed Reading's emissions have already reduced by 32% since 2005 (38% per capita). This is ahead of target, the best in Berkshire and amongst the best performing in the UK;
- Programme for revision of the Climate Change Strategy;
- Grant aid for another series of ‘Reading Climate Forum’ events – which was approved.

Reports on progress with the Reading ‘Carbon Plan’ (Item 10) and Climate Change Strategy Action Plan, for period to March 2016, (Item 11), went to the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport (SEPT) Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> November – see <http://www.reading.gov.uk/article/9626/Strategic-Environment-Planning--Transport-Committee-23-NOV-2016> .

A process of review and revision of the Climate Change Strategy <http://www.readingclimateaction.org.uk/strategy/> is starting – any comments or offers of involvement welcome. A first draft revision of “Strategic Priorities” will be discussed by RBC staff and Theme Leads in mid-January with a view to public consultation in February.

### **Grazeley Housing Proposals**

Berkshire Councils are combining to address demand for future development – estimated at 65,500 homes by 2036 - by applying for government funding for infrastructure improvements to support a possible ‘Garden Village’ of up to 15,000 homes at Grazeley just south of J11 of the M4. <http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/reading-berkshire-news/grazeley-garden-settlement-wheres-money-12325298> and <http://www.wokinghampaper.com/comment-wokinghams-local-plan-cunning-plan-ahead/>

In the 1990s Reading FoE helped CPRE and local residents to fight off Wokingham's plans for a much smaller green field development at Grazeley.

### **Threats to Kennet Mouth and the Thames Riverbank**

Long-standing ideas – opposed by many environmental campaigners over the last 20 years - for a park-and-ride site at Broken Brow and a bus-way across the Kennet to provide an easy public transport route to central Reading.

***Park-and-Ride:*** Wokingham's planning application for a 277-space park and ride site at Broken Brow – just to the East of Kennet Mouth was approved by Wokingham's Planning Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> November. Campaigners' hopes now rest on legal challenges and persuading the Local Economic Partnership not to grant funding for the project because of its low benefit-cost ratio compared to other options.

***Mass Rapid Transit:*** Reading and Wokingham are expected to submit planning applications in 2017. Reading FoE submitted comments in 2016 calling on the Council to look at options for bus priority between Cemetery junction and Suttons Seeds and for traffic reduction.

### **Food Waste**

Recent news article about claim that re3 research shows a typical household in Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell area throws away 1.2kg of food a week that was not prepared or taken out of its packaging, featuring childrens' discussions at the 2016 Berkshire Model Climate Conference.

<http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/reading-berkshire-news/23000-tonnes-food-thrown-away-12231439>

### **Donations – Thank You!**

We are very grateful for two recent donations, each of £50, which will allow us to go forward in 2017 in a sound financial position – one was from an individual supporter, the other from the Bracknell Branch of Unison whose members like to support a range of local community groups.

## 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](http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk)

True Food Co-op: [www.truefood.coop](http://www.truefood.coop) - shop in Emmer Green.

Citizens Committee on Oil Peak And Decline (COPAD) [www.copad.org](http://www.copad.org)

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

[www.ejfoundation.org](http://www.ejfoundation.org) (Environmental Justice Foundation)

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

## Reading FoE Officers

At our AGM on April 13<sup>th</sup> 2016 Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were re-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](mailto: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 2016/17

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.