

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter Jan/Feb 2018

For more information: <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading> or www.readingfoe.org.uk
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friends of
the earth
Reading

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.

Wednesday January 10th - 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting** – key topics East Reading Mass Rapid Transit and Reading Plan.

Wednesday February 14th - 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting** – topics by e-mail later.

Other Activities (not run by Reading FoE so check for changes):

Reading 2050 'Place and Environment' lectures – UoR London Road, Thursdays: 11th January - 'Urban Room'; 25th January - 'Great Place Project', 8th February - 'Art and Culture'

http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/architecture/B20021_Architecture_Reading_2050_poster_AWv3_WEBB.pdf

Tuesday 16th January – 7:45 pm Pangbourne Village Hall - **Climate Change in our Gardens** – talk by Dr. Michael Keith-Lucas to Reading and District Natural History Society – non-members £3. http://rdnhs.org.uk/blog/?page_id=6

Wednesday 31st January – 7:30 at RISC – **Fire in the Blood** – Global Justice Now meeting showing film – 'an intricate tale of medicine, monopoly and malice' – about denial of AIDS medication to the global south.

Advance notice of two events at UoR in March: Monday 12th March – 18:00 - **The Great Debate – Engineering Better Food Systems**; – Wednesday 14th March – 19:30 - **The Bee's Needs: How to Save the World's Pollinators**. <http://www.reading.ac.uk/news-and-events/about-eventlist.aspx>. Need to decide whether to re-schedule RFoE March meeting from 14th ... or perhaps agree to adjourn to a bar after the Bee meeting?

Repair Cafe – third weekend of month – not sure of details for 2018 so see www.readingrepaircafe.org.uk and <https://www.facebook.com/ReadingRepairCafe>

Reading Bicycle Kitchen – has left Jackson's Corner but is now running frequent 'pop-up' events in various locations – see <http://www.readingbicyclekitchen.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>

Clean Air Petition Presentation – 22nd November

Enrico with Councillors Page and Absalom



Richard and John with banner



Petition Presentation: 'Clean Air Everywhere – In Reading!'

Enrico presented our petition to Reading's Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee (SEPT) on 22nd November. By that time we had over 250 signatures on paper and over 150 on the e-petition so could claim an impressive total of over 400 in less than two months. Thanks to everyone who helped to achieve this – particularly Trish at the Town Meal, Chris and Barbara on two Saturday mornings in Broad Street, and Richard (and Margaret who took the pictures) for supporting the photo-call!

The petition text said:

"I call for a new air quality action plan to be put in place by 2018 with the necessary resources to cut all pollutant levels to below World Health Organisation guidelines by 2020."

It was well-reported in the media - probably because Councillors Page and Absolom attended our photo-call outside the Civic Offices - including on the front page of the Midweek Chronicle which is distributed free of charge to many households, and in getreading's on-line 'In Your Area' newsfeed.

The text of the presentation is at http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Documents/SEPT_Presentation_notes.pdf . To view the presentation on video see item 5 in: https://channel.royalcast.com/readingboroughcouncil/#!/readingboroughcouncil/20171122_1

WHO guideline for Nitrogen Dioxide is 40 ug/m³ as an annual mean - the same as the EU legal limit. Reading is expected to meet this in 2020, which is the government's excuse for not requiring or supporting more local action.

For micro-particles PM2.5 the WHO guideline is 10 ug/m³ as an annual mean – but Reading is working to UK and European objectives of 25 ug/m³. Enrico pointed out that "*Being less than 2.5 thousandths of a millimetre across PM2.5 can enter and persist within the alveoli, the deepest part of the lungs.*"

The government monitors PM2.5 at its 'urban background' monitor in the middle of the Cemetery, about 100 m south of the A4, where the annual average was 9 ug/m³ in 2016. Measurements of NO₂ at this location are much lower than in town centre locations near busy roads so we don't think this PM2.5 result is valid for the town centre.

At the meeting Councillor Page thanked Reading FoE for the petition and said our concerns are shared by all members of the Committee. Reading intends to bring forward a report in 2018 when there should be more information from the government - which is being sued by Client Earth about air quality.

Councillor Page said that Reading will keenly await assistance from government in terms of implementing a Clean Air Zone and associated measures to improve air quality. Commenting on the Council's update on its Air Quality Plan (at Item 10 on the Agenda) Councillor Page said the council had been committed since 2009 to installing a Low Emission Zone if support from central government made it possible. He looked forward to the government providing more detail and funding in 2018.

We will try to keep in touch with the Council Officers, and hope progress will be reported to the next SEPT Committee meeting on 19th March 2018. It is encouraging that there is continuing national debate on air quality with calls for diesel scrappage schemes and clean air zones.

Other Key Points from November SEPT meeting:

The papers are available from the agenda at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/article/10591/Strategic-Environment-Planning-and-Transport-Committee-22-NOV-2017> . To view the discussions on video see: https://channel.royalcast.com/readingboroughcouncil/#!/readingboroughcouncil/20171122_1

Air Quality Plan progress is reported at Item 10 – focus is on NO₂ ... RBC accepts more work is needed.

Vehicle Idling review is at Item 11 – Reading intends to adopt the 'I'm No Idler' publicity campaign currently running in London. Proposed actions include recruiting volunteers to take the message to offending motorists. Document detailing this is on the link from the Agenda. It would be good to see a cost/benefit analysis of this scheme.

Reading's Carbon Footprint report is at Item 13 - the 2016/17 carbon footprint for the Council's corporate activities is 45 % lower than the baseline emissions in 2008/09, well ahead of target to reduce by 50% by 2020. The total renewably generated energy in 2016/17 was equivalent to 5% of the total energy use of the council, or 7.1% of energy used in buildings, which continues to move towards the challenging 2020 renewable energy target of 15%.

Local Authority Energy Company – proposal to establish a 'White Label' company to supply gas and electricity is reported at Item 14. This may help to address fuel poverty but impact on climate-changing emissions is debateable.

East Reading Mass Rapid Transit:

This bus and bike route would link the A329 to Vastern Road via the Tesco store and a bridge over the Kennet. 'Save Our Ancient Riverside' (SOAR) - the East Reading campaign against Park and Ride and Mass Rapid Transit proposals around Kennet Mouth – ran a very successful 'public debate' in Reading School in December.

John Sharpe (SOAR Spokesperson), Matt Jackson (Wildlife Trust), and Green Councillor Rob White debated the issues with Councillor Tony Page, Martijn Gilbert - CEO of Reading Buses, and ecologist Kerry Elliott from Peter Brett Associates.

Many members of the audience spoke to express their concerns for loss of amenity and effects on wildlife. A closing poll showed 90% opposition to the scheme, and the meeting received widespread publicity.

Evidence on Air Quality presented in the Environmental Statement shows that neither the MRT nor 'MRT + PNR' make a significant difference to modelled annual average air quality in 2021 at the receptors analysed. Worst-case 2021 modelled receptor in the Environmental Statement is at 239 London Road (north side of London Road near junction with Amity Road). This has an annual average for NO₂ about 10% below the EU legal limit and is about 12% below the WHO guideline for PM_{2.5}.

Discussion of alternative proposals in the planning documents is very limited but there is more in the Business Case, <http://www.reading.gov.uk/transport-schemes-and-projects>, where you can find the Option Appraisal Report. This states that "the eastern corridor has reached its capacity, therefore no further growth can be accommodated". Table 5-1 summarises 10 options considered of which 'Park and Rail' (#8), 'MRT route South of the Railway' (#9 – very high cost), and 'A4 Tidal Bus Lane' (#10 – very low cost, rapid implementation) would save the Kennet Mouth environment.

There is no consideration of traffic reduction measures such as road pricing or reduction of in-town parking spaces, and only one option for bus priority along the A4 is considered. There seem to be no projections of future journey times to show any reduction in congestion, and numbers in the traffic projections suggest that the MRT will make little or no difference to the number of vehicle journeys within Reading.

The aim is always "enabling additional journeys and reducing journey times to support economic growth" when really tackling congestion and pollution to improve life requires much bolder policies to achieve greater modal shift. The cost/benefit analyses don't cost the value of Kennet Mouth's environment to local people at all.

The MRT is expected to go to planning committees early in 2018. To see others' objections, and to make your own: Wokingham: <http://planning.wokingham.gov.uk/FastWebPL/welcome.asp> use application number 172048
Reading: http://planning.reading.gov.uk/fastweb_PL/welcome.asp use application number 171108.
SOAR Facebook page is at <https://en-gb.facebook.com/NoPaRThamessideWokingham/> :

Revision of Reading Plan:

The Local Plan is out for a 'Pre-Submission' consultation – <http://www.reading.gov.uk/newlocalplan>. There seem to be some improvements on the previous draft but it still proposes massive growth for Reading, some of which is to be accommodated in neighbouring Councils' areas.

The Council is proposing a local version of the 'Zero Carbon Homes' process (a national scheme withdrawn by George Osborne) which would raise insulation standards for new homes above building regulations and create a local carbon offsetting fund to be paid for by developers who could not fully comply by implementing on-site measures. This would be £1,800 per tonne towards carbon offsetting within Reading (calculated as £60 per tonne over a 30 year period). See paragraph 4.4.44 of the draft.

The plan has to achieve government acceptance at an Examination ... probably later this year ... so the proposed standards are far short of PassivHaus.

Our comments on previous draft are on this [link](#) - we must respond by 26th January so please let us have any further comments you would like Reading FoE to make.

Traffic in Reading

'*getreading*' reports on seven ways in which traffic is being tackled <http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/reading-berkshire-news/seven-ways-traffic-reading-being-14102943> ... and on seven developments that will change demand <http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/property/seven-developments-change-face-reading-14088731>. A RBC summary of progress on major transport schemes is at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/8163/Item13/pdf/Item13.pdf>.

Cycling and Walking Plan

Department for Transport (DfT) is encouraging local authorities to develop Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs). Reading Borough Council (RBC) has successfully bid for technical assistance in preparing a joint LCWIP with Wokingham and West Berks Councils; this technical assistance will be provided by an external consultant. <https://www.readingcyclingcampaign.org.uk/reading-wokingham-and-west-berks-to-get-an-lcwip/> ... see also Sustrans' comments <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/blog/cycling-and-walking-equals-better-air-quality>

New FoE Nature Website!

Please see <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/nature> for latest on wildlife and farming campaigns. FoE say in 2017:

- We have completely changed the UK government's position on bee-harming neonicotinoid pesticides
- We persuaded the 10 leading garden centres and DIY stores to stop using neonicotinoids
- We formed strong relationships with farmers who wanted to grow crops in bee-friendly ways

Pathways to running a flood forecasting centre: an adventure game!:

Chris and John went to a lecture on Climate Change and Flooding and heard about this on-line game (developed in collaboration with UoR researchers) which gives insights into the complexities. Link is here: <https://goo.gl/bfZISB>.

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 12th 2017 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 .

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 2017/18

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.