

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter Jan/Feb 2019

For more information: <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading> or 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.

Wednesday January 9th – 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting** – topics expected to include discussion of implications for Reading of Crossrail/Elizabeth Line and other potential rail-based developments, transport options for East Reading without a 'Mass Rapid Transit', and how to campaign locally on climate change.

Wednesday February 13th - 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting** – topics by e-mail later.

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

Tuesday January 8th – 19:30 – **Extinction Rebellion Reading** – inaugural planning meeting for Reading - Wokingham based group - upstairs at RISC ... <https://www.facebook.com/events/764727333860893/> ... see also <https://www.facebook.com/Extinction-Rebellion-Reading-526695181144255/> ...and below.

Tuesday January 22nd – 18:30 – **Towards a sustainable future: The Circular Economy** – Joe Iles, Editor-in-Chief of 'Circulate' for the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. The Library, Great Expectations - a meeting arranged by Ethical Reading <https://www.facebook.com/events/599976400416713/>. Booking on the link.

Tuesday January 29th – Pangbourne Village Hall - 7:45 - **Neonicotinoids and bees** – talk to RDNHS - £3 non-members. Dr. Ben Woodcock of the [Centre for Environment and Hydrology \(C.E.H.\)](http://www.ceh.ac.uk/) will discuss the impacts and implications of the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on both wild and honey bees in Europe explaining some of the evidence base underpinning the recent EU ban on these chemicals. http://rdnhs.org.uk/blog/?page_id=6

Thursday 31st January - 18:00 – 19:00 - **Reading's Climate Change Strategy** - (Chris Beales (Reading Climate Change Partnership) and Ben Burfoot (Reading Borough Council)). Reading 2050 lecture. London Road Campus UoR. <https://www.reading.ac.uk/architecture/architecture-public-lectures.aspx>

Monday 4th February – **Geological Storage of Radioactive Waste** – Prof. John Cosgrove, Imperial College. 7:45 for 8:00, Sorby Room, Wager Building UoR. <https://readinggeology.org.uk/lectures.php>

Repair Cafe – usually third weekend of month – <http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/projects/reading-repair-cafe/>

Reading Bicycle Kitchen – '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>

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Marching for Climate Justice



Thames riverbank saved from MRT – again – by Wokingham Planning Committee!



East Reading 'Mass Rapid Transit'

In June Reading's proposed 'Mass Rapid Transit' bridge for a bus-lane over the River Kennet was rejected by Wokingham Council's Planning Committee, on Landscape grounds, by 5 votes to 4. Then Reading altered the plans - "The proposed scheme now includes the addition of planters beside the viaduct parapets containing ivy, or a similar plant, to spill over the deck to provide 'greening' of the upper deck of the structure" – i.e. no significant change - and on December 12th Wokingham rejected it by 6 votes to 3.

After a rally outside the Council offices – accompanied by bird-song played from mobile phones, and songs – we went inside and watched the debate. Tamzin Morphy presented SOAR's case and she was joined by Tim Marsh for ACER and an individual objector. Local Borough Councillors Younis and Croy spoke against it as did Councillor Firmager for Earley Town Council. In committee discussion Labour Councillor Carl Doran determinedly cut through the misinformation in the 'officer's summary' which suggested there had been ten 'improvements' to the scheme when there had been only one. As Tamzin put it "The only thing Reading have offered you is ivy and not even any holly."

Here's Chronicle report <https://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/17296020.refused-wokingham-councillors-reject-controversial-mrt-scheme-for-a-second-time/>

Reading now say "the Council is currently considering its options regarding next steps for the scheme". We understand funding allocated by the Berkshire Local Transport Body will have been lost, but Reading could re-apply and/or could appeal against Wokingham's decision. It is not clear if they will take the revised scheme to their Planning Committee in the next few months – it has not yet been withdrawn and is at http://planning.reading.gov.uk/fastweb_PL/welcome.asp - use application number 181822.

For latest information see Save Our Ancient Riverside (SOAR) website at: www.saveourancientriverside.co.uk. SOAR will continue to monitor the situation and campaign to improve the environment around Newtown and Kennet Mouth.

Clean Air Everywhere – In Reading!

The government has directed RBC to retrofit approximately 140 buses to Euro VI standard – the Council estimates that this could be implemented by the end of 2019 and that this would finally bring London Road and Chatham Street into compliance with the EU limit of 40 ug/m³ for Nitrogen Dioxide by the end of 2021. (See November 2018 newsletter).

Modelling for the ERMRT with Euro VI buses in place showed concentrations in 2020 in Patriot Place as an annual average of 46.7 ug/m³ for NO₂ and 11.2 ug/m³ for PM_{2.5}. For particles PM_{2.5} Reading uses EU Objective of 25 ug/m³ annual mean as a target - we believe they should aim to be well below the WHO guideline of 10 ug/m³.

So in November John asked RBC's SEPT Committee to "at least provide estimates, if not measurements, of roadside PM_{2.5} in critical locations, and an assessment of its impact on health, and include measures to address this pollutant in its revision of the local transport plan".

The response was to provide measurements of PM₁₀ from three roadside monitors (AQMS) and the assumption that 70% of PM₁₀ was PM_{2.5}:

Caversham Road:	PM ₁₀ = 23	PM _{2.5} = 16.1
Oxford Road:	PM ₁₀ = 21	PM _{2.5} = 14.7
London Road:	PM ₁₀ = 18	PM _{2.5} = 12.6

So on Caversham Road the PM_{2.5} level is estimated at 60% above the WHO guideline – which itself is not a 'safe threshold' level.

Councillor Page commented "Measures to address the high-level of PM_{2.5} at the identified locations are already underway, including the declassification of the Oxford Road and supporting package of sustainable transport measures along the corridor as well as improvements to the bus fleet that will see vehicles upgraded to EURO VI standards." But he did not offer any estimates of the impact on health.

In a supplementary question John suggested that estimates of the health impacts would strengthen the Council's case for its proposed actions "promoting sustainable alternatives to the private car, managing congestion and air quality whilst enabling sustainable growth in Reading, and the wider region."

It seems that Bath has taken an innovative approach – making a traffic dataset available to the local hacking community to investigate. See the video on <https://www.bathhacked.org/breathe-hack-day/breathe-hack-day-results-and-next-steps/>

Local Transport Plan:

We are told Reading's draft fourth Local Transport Plan – promising to investigate "demand management measures, such as Road User Charging, Workplace Parking Levy, Clean Air Zone or Low Emission Zone" - will be available for public consultation in early 2019. We hope they will adopt a 'less traffic, better town' approach taking road-space from general traffic to tackle climate, clean air, congestion and cost. Transport is responsible for 27% of domestic CO₂ emissions and the level of traffic reduction needed by 2030 could be anywhere between 20% and 60%, depending on factors including the speed of the switch to electric vehicles and how fast the electricity powering them is decarbonised. NICE recently called for priority for walking and cycling - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-46755140>

Pollinators: Neonics Ban in Place!

Friends of the Earth have been celebrating the introduction of an EU ban on use of three neonicotinoid pesticides on outdoor crops which came into force in December. And although several EU countries are considering allowing exemptions to the ban, the UK has said no to allowing neonics back on our fields.

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/bees/neonics-ban-protecting-bees-pesticides>

Pollinator Action Plan – we hope to make the case for this to our local Council soon. Reading Climate Change Partnership is to launch a ‘citizen science’ project to see whether plants for pollinators can be incorporated into urban roadside verges within their normal mowing regime and still give reasonable supplies of pollen and nectar.

Climate Change:

“Together for Climate Justice”

Some of us went to London on 1st December to join this march to mark the start of the next ‘Conference of Parties’ in Poland. While numbers weren’t massive there was a respectable crowd including supporters of ‘Extinction Rebellion’. London’s streets were packed with shoppers who seemed interested in seeing our banners and hearing our shouts and chants so we got the message across to a lot of people – including a surprised Wokingham Councillor on the pavement!

COP 24 – Climate talks in Poland:

Friends of the Earth report on the talks is on the link. It explains that world leaders did not come to an agreement on rules to save us from the worst impacts of climate change and that the US, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia refused to accept the latest report on the benefits of limiting temperature rises to 1.5 °C.

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change/cop-climate-talks>

Ollie Hayes, lead climate change campaigner at Friends of the Earth has commented: “we’re working to make sure the UK government takes its fair share of action to keep global temperature rises to 1.5°C in line with the Paris Agreement. That means re-considering infrastructure projects like the Heathrow expansion, new road programmes and fracking, as well as putting a rocket booster under the clean energy future we want to see. In the longer term we want government to set a target for ‘net-zero’ greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 – that means only producing the same amount of emissions that we could remove from the atmosphere, for example by planting more forests.”

Other news and links:

Video of Carbon Brief press conference at COP24 on impacts of missing the Paris targets – if you’ve got 90 minutes

<https://attend-emea.broadcast.skype.com/en-US/2a6c12ad-406a-4f33-b686-f78ff5822208/c515203a-5995-4d87-abae-5545e23a659a/player?cid=wprxsxdtwuo6c4b7kommwvppkx66mtfjz7k2qzaxyacv7l3tdgpa&rid=EMEA>

Jeremy Leggett on Financial Times comments on reasons for failure to act – especially on British Petroleum:

<https://jeremyleggett.net/2018/12/31/the-ft-editorial-board-concludes-those-who-accept-climate-change-but-pretend-to-solve-it-are-a-major-cause-of-the-crisis-who-might-they-be/>

Oxford FoE are part of a group working on climate change in their county <https://change4climate.uk/>

Carbon Brief: Ten charts on global progress on clean energy – <https://j.mp/2QeCAFc> - lots of data in map form.

‘Nature’ warning on wildlife impacts <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-07586-5>

Extinction Rebellion: After various actions and arrests in November groups are forming all over the country including in Bristol, Oxford and Reading. Aim is “To support and encourage a citizens’ uprising in the UK (of about 2 million people) involving low level and higher risk acts of civil disobedience by some (with others willing to support those that take actions). When ready, create a participatory, democratic process that shapes the change – a Citizens Assembly.” <https://rebellion.earth> .For Reading/Wokingham contacts see ‘Diary’ on front page.

Heathrow Court Action

FoE’s challenge will be heard in March <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change/heathrow-legal-challenges-cleared-takeoff> . In December we were asked to send them our 2017 consultation response as evidence of grassroots opposition.

Oxford-Cambridge Expressway:

Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust has launched a legal challenge against the Government’s plans for a major new road <https://bit.ly/2DzYeBU> . Comments in ‘Lush Times’ remind us that this is another major road dream that won’t go away. <https://bit.ly/2OKkydp>

Groundswell 2019:

In 2019 FoE’s annual ‘Basecamp’ gathering will be replaced by a series of meetings in every region of the country to scale up the movement for environmental justice. Groundswell 2019 will bring hundreds of us together in London (27 April), Darlington (18 May), Manchester (1 June), Birmingham (8 June), Bristol (15 June) and Cambridge (29 June). Register here to be kept informed of details <https://actionnetwork.org/forms/groundswell-2019-coming-soon>

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 11th 2018 Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were re-elected to the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively. A draft Privacy Policy was approved.

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 2018/19

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.