

Reading Friends of the Earth



Newsletter Jan-Feb 2020

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** 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 8th - 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting** – agree response to Transport for South East consultation (see below) and discuss future activities to try to get more local action on the climate emergency in 2020 following our December meeting on this topic.

Wednesday February 12th - 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting** – topics by e-mail later – hope to have news on RBC proposals for Transport Plan and Reading Climate Action Network revision of Strategy.

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

Tuesday January 21st – 19:45 Pangbourne. **The day after tomorrow – is the Gulf Stream set to shutdown?** – Dr Jon Robson (Univ. Reading) - RDNHS meeting - £3 non-members. http://rdnhs.org.uk/blog/?page_id=6

Thursday January 23rd – 17:30 UoR London Road – Architecture student public lecture series – not sure of topics or speakers <https://www.reading.ac.uk/architecture/architecture-public-lectures.aspx> ... also 27th February.

Thursday January 23rd – 19:00 for 19:30 - UoR Whiteknights – **The impact of the changing nature of computing on climate science** – an IET lecture in Van Emden Theatre, Edith Morley building, Whiteknights campus. Details and registration at <https://communities.theiet.org/communities/events/item/258/77/24127>

Tuesday February 4th – 19:45 Pangbourne - **Biological control of Himalayan Balsam**
http://rdnhs.org.uk/blog/?page_id=6 RDNHS meeting - £3 non-members.

Tuesday February 18th – 19:45 Pangbourne - **Knepp Wildland – is wilding good for wildlife?**
http://rdnhs.org.uk/blog/?page_id=6 RDNHS meeting - £3 non-members.

Tuesday February 25th – 19:00 (? for 19:30) UoR Agriculture Dept. Whiteknights – **The Role of Agri-Technology Applications in Future Farming Systems** – for details and to book see <http://www.reading.ac.uk/15/about/newsandevents/Events/Event832445.aspx>

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

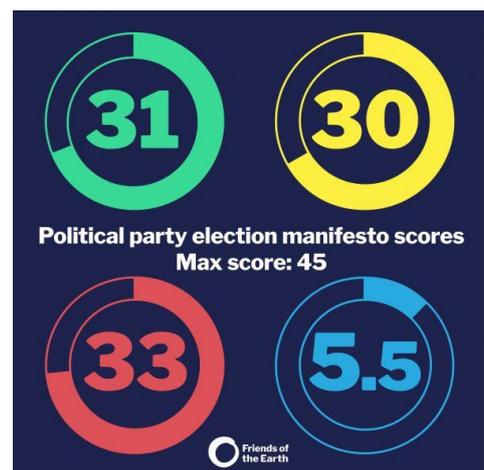
Reading Bicycle Kitchen – ‘pop-up’ events in various locations – see <http://www.readingbicyclekitchen.org/>

Green Drinks at RISC – usually on the first Tuesday of every month.. <http://www.greendrinks.org/berkshire/reading>

Some of 16 Tesla chargers in Lower Earley
(before site flooded) (see below)



Friends of the Earth assessment of 2019
General Election manifestos (see below)



News from Wokingham:

Wokingham Borough have announced that their Climate Emergency Action Plan will see £24 million invested over the next three years. It will be launched at the Council meeting on January 23rd. It is proposed to build solar farms; start an energy supply company; create a 'Green Bank' to lend residents money to improve their homes (appointing suppliers to advise on effective measures); plant 250k trees; and other measures on transport and waste.

Tesla have installed 16 electric vehicle chargers near Sindlesham Mill on a site which was badly flooded in late December. According to FoE's statistics (published October, perhaps dated) Wokingham has 23 chargers and Reading 17 ... far more will be needed if most cars go electric ... but many will be charged overnight at homes ...

News from Westminster:

National Friends of the Earth assessment of the party manifestos on environmental issues is at <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/general-election/general-election-2019-manifestos-final-scores>. Initially FoE said that "the Green Party most consistently meet our demands with a manifesto of great ambition and numerous detailed policies" but after the parties were given the opportunity to make additional submissions the Greens did not respond by the deadline so they fell just short of the Labour total. FoE's process has been critiqued by Jonathan Porritt (former CEO of FoE) <http://www.jonathonporritt.com/blog/friends-earths-disgraceful-manifesto-analysis?>

The Conservatives scored way below the other three parties – we have to hope that they will learn from Wokingham's Conservative council's positive approach and provide much more leadership and funding. The UK government is hosting the 2020 Conference of Parties in Glasgow in December and it is vital that it succeeds.

In a more recent posting on the election result FoE point to growing concerns about environmental issues and ask people to **sign a petition** for the government to take urgent action on climate change.

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/general-election/boris-johnson-vs-climate-breakdown-what-will-2020-bring>

Reading Strategic Environment, Transport and Planning Committee (SEPT) – 20th November:

With 39% of Reading's 2016 emissions coming from homes something must be done! In November we asked SEPT: to pilot 'deep retrofit' on some of Reading's own properties in 2020 to find out what techniques are most effective and so that the Council, the public, and local businesses can gain experience of the work as soon as possible.

RBC replied that "Of particular importance is the high energy consuming aging housing stock which is 'hard to treat' as it has solid walls and these can be difficult and costly to insulate" and "it is imperative the Government invest in existing housing retrofit as a matter of priority." RBC promised progress in a 'new housing strategy' but no immediate action.

In a separate question we also reminded the Council that it was two years since we presented a petition calling for air quality to meet WHA guidelines and asked for current estimates of the health effects in Reading.

The full papers, including questions from XR and reports on air quality and carbon footprint analysis are at <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=3117&Ver=4>

Reading Budget Consultation – how should we respond?

Reading is consulting on its budget proposals until 19th January <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/css/reading-borough-council-budget-consultation/>. Proposals over three years include investing £7.5 million on energy saving measures in 'buildings and renewable energy infrastructure to reduce costs, generate income and contribute to the goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions'; £500k in 2021/22 on a Transport Demand Management scheme; £1,489k on Food Waste and smaller bins.

Is this enough when previous estimates for cost of achieving 'net zero' were around £3.5 billion, so over 10 years would be £350 million per year? All four leisure centres are to be improved ... an opportunity to retro-fit energy saving measures. There seems to be no commitment to retro-fitting any buildings to really low-carbon standards but this is something to be worked for this year.

Climate Campaigning Workshop: 2020 targets for 'net-zero' in 2030:

Seventeen people came to our workshop on 1st December to debate local priorities with focus on retro-fitting homes, renewable energy, and transport. It's important that Reading starts to make more progress – specialist businesses and skilled workers take time to develop.

The meeting covered a lot of ground with very useful contributions from people including Tony Cowling, Michael Bright and Adrian Lawson. Malcolm Fowles introduced a spreadsheet he had created to access national data on 'renewable' electricity generation. Particularly interesting to see Reading's contribution is very dependent on landfill gas which is likely to decline (it's better that allowing methane leakage but it's only 'renewable' if we keep adding biodegradable material to landfill) and may turn into a methane leakage problem as the flows decline..

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1UMOGIUKasTIAESsRIUQ0YPd_GXBFSym_zRjebpDDLHc/edit#gid=1229160507

We should arrange topic-specific meetings in 2020 as details emerge of the revision of the Local Transport Plan (results of consultation were promised end November but have not yet been published) and the revision of the Reading Climate Change Strategy (consultation draft now probably March).

Reading Hydro

Share offer is now open, aiming to raise £700k to install two generators at the weir in Caversham. Share offer information is at <https://hydro.readinguk.org/>

Transport for the South East – consultation:

Transport for the South East <https://transportforthesoutheast.org.uk/> is a regional body that is seeking ‘statutory status’ – recognition by the Government so that it can represent the interests of the South East’s Councils. Their consultation on their proposed strategy closes on 10th January – we should aim to respond individually and as a group - <https://transportforthesoutheast.org.uk/transport-strategy/> .

There is much to welcome in this study, in particular acknowledgement of environmental issues and a commitment to ‘plan around people – not vehicles’, but it seems focussed on economic growth, is short on sustainability indicators, does not assess short-term solutions to urgent issues, and makes assumptions about economic growth that are out of line with recent performance.

- While it is good to look forward to 2050 with a ‘net zero’ target for carbon emissions the IPCC scenario for limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C calls for global emissions to be reduced by around 50% by 2030 and the UK should aim to be in the lead on this before hosting the 2020 Conference of Parties in Glasgow next December. There don’t seem to be any projections for carbon emissions from transport for 2030, let alone a commitment to achieve rapid transition towards reduced traffic and non-fossil-fuel vehicles in that timescale.
- Table 5.1 of the strategy summarises the priorities and indicators and mentions more-reliable journey times, but does not include a reduction in time lost to road traffic congestion.
- The preferred ‘Sustainable Route to Growth’ scenario suggests a massive increase in economic output but this is because it makes a trend assumption of 2.1% annual change in GVA per job (Scenario Forecasting Technical Report Table 5.2) and significant growth in population and employment. The estimated average annual increase in UK productivity in the decade or so since the financial crisis was 0.3% according to <https://www.statslife.org.uk/news/4398-rss-announces-statistics-of-the-decade> .

Friends of the Earth have created an **easy on-line action** for people to take to respond to the consultation <https://act.friendsoftheearth.uk/target/call-for-healthier-transport-south-east?>

Berkshire Society of Local Council Clerks:

John and Steve gave a presentation on climate change to a meeting of the professional organisation for Parish and Town Clerks on Friday morning, 6th December, in Thatcham, using a slide-set from our national organisation. This was built around the national FoE ‘20 actions ...’ document ... which is on this link ... which mostly addresses emissions. <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/reports/20-actions-parish-and-town-councils-can-take-climate-and-nature-emergency>

Sam Cartwright of BBOWT followed with a presentation on ‘Climate and Biodiversity’ with focus on ‘Nature Recovery Networks’ ... local governments should work towards linking habitats as well as conserving key sites.

Revision of Reading’s Biodiversity Action Plan

John attended the first meeting of the steering group which is being led by consultant Giles Sutton. The current BAP is at http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/5972/Reading-Biodiversity-Action-Plan/pdf/Reading_BAP_February_062.pdf . There was good discussion at the meeting – one outcome should be identification of key areas in which to aim for ‘net gain’ for biodiversity when off-setting losses to development. The aim is to have a revised plan ready for adoption in March after two more meetings of the steering group.

The Future of Rail:

A new report from the Campaign for Better Transport can be downloaded from <https://bettertransport.org.uk/read-future-rail?> It includes a section on environmental impacts claiming that travel by rail from London to Edinburgh releases 5 times less carbon than flying and calling for continuation of the electrification programme.

Population statistics – future growth:

Slides from ‘Reading 2050’ lecture on 19th November - Future Housing and Population Change in Reading - are at <https://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/architecture/191119-Reading-2050-Debbie-Mayes-and-Simon-Macklen.pdf> . Suggests that by 2050 the total population will have risen by 20,000 (+12%) and the number of older persons will increase from 20,000 to 35,000 (+75%). Not clear how environmental implications were factored into these figures. They list a number of issues to address including:

- The housing demands of an ageing population
- Supporting a growth in the local labour force to balance with Reading 2050 economic aspiration
- Increasing demand from surrounding, less affordable, areas – including London

Slidesets from previous lectures are available on

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/15/about/newsandevents/Events/www.reading.ac.uk/architecture/architecture-public-lectures.aspx> – particularly relevant is presentation on Climate Change Strategy from 31st January 2019.

Useful Links and General Information:

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

– Policy and Insight <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/>

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

Reading Climate Action Network - <https://readingcan.org.uk>

Extinction Rebellion, Reading: <https://www.facebook.com/xrReading/>

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

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

Save Our Ancient Riverside - <https://saveourancientriverside.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 10th 2019 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 (currently 6 per year) and information about important events and actions.

Reading FoE Subscriptions – Subscribe NOW for 2019/20

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.