

# Reading Friends of the Earth Newsletter January-February 2021



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**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. **However because of Covid 19 the next meetings will be on-line by Zoom.**

**Wednesday January 13<sup>th</sup>:** Would be good to see people on a Zoom call at 8:00 so please register on Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/135512169547> and you should automatically be sent the links to the Zoom meeting.

**Wednesday February 10<sup>th</sup>:** Expect this will also be on-line, link to register will be sent later to our email lists – or if requested by email to [info@readingfoe.org.uk](mailto:info@readingfoe.org.uk) .

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## **Other Activities with FoE:**

Nothing local planned at present – ideas welcome!

FoE South East is arranging an on-line '**South East Regional meet**', probably on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January, from 18:30 to 20:00. An "informal gathering to help you share ideas on campaigning and just say hello to other people." Links will be circulated to our 'active' e-mail list when available.

There are a number of FoE webinars etc. available including one on Tuesday February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 13:00 - 14:00 GMT "How to tell if your council's Climate Action Plan is ambitious and robust". See [Training | Climate Action \(friendsoftheearth.uk\)](https://www.friendsoftheearth.org.uk/training-climate-action)

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

'**Become more effective campaigning on climate and environmental issues**' - Global Justice Now have invited [Hope for the Future](https://www.hopeforthefuture.org/) to run this training session on Tuesday 9 February 7pm – 9pm – aimed particularly at influencing Alok Sharma MP (Reading West) who is Minister for COP 26, the 26th United Nations Climate Conference. Final details not yet available ... presumably will be an on-line meeting.

**Repair Cafe** – usually third weekend of month - seems to be continuing when legal but check on their website – giving Zoom advice on January 17<sup>th</sup> ... [\(1\) Reading Repair Cafe | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/135512169547/) ... see also <http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/projects/reading-repair-cafe/>

**Reading Bicycle Kitchen** – regular sessions at the Queens Arms – but currently outdoors – see <http://www.readingbicyclekitchen.org/>

**Green Drinks at RISC** – usually on the first Tuesday of every month – not sure what if anything is happening during Covid restrictions – see <http://www.greendrinks.org/Berkshire/Reading> and also <https://www.facebook.com/groups/243919622305571/>

## **Alok Sharma MP:**

Reading West MP Alok Sharma is to leave his position as business secretary to focus full-time on his role as president of the UN COP26 climate conference in November. He said he was "delighted to have been asked by the PM to dedicate all my energies" to the position.

## **The Limits to Growth:**

It's nearly half a century since the 1972 publication of this original study of what we now think of as sustainable development on a finite planet. While the initial study was widely criticised Wikipedia tells us that some economists now find that its central 'business as usual' projection has been quite close to the observed trends in many respects. But it's the principles that matter – no-one would expect the fine details to be correct over such a long period. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Limits\\_to\\_Growth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Limits_to_Growth)

Perhaps after Covid governments will give more weight to experts, simulations, and the 'precautionary principle'?

### **Reading Clean Air and Safer Transport Forum – 3<sup>rd</sup> December**

This on-line meeting heard a very positive account of proposals for School Streets around Park Lane School in Tilehurst. The scheme will allow closures of traffic outside Park Lane Primary School for up to 45 minutes twice a day during term time. [Tilehurst to see Reading's first School Street at Park Lane Primary | Reading Chronicle](#)

Similar proposals are to be consulted on for Crescent Road in East Reading - under the scheme, part of Crescent Road between Wokingham Road and Bulmershe Road would temporarily become a pedestrian and cycle only zone for 45 minutes at the beginning and end of the school day. [This Reading street could be first to close to drivers during school run - Berkshire Live \(getreading.co.uk\)](#)

The meeting also heard about progress on 'Tranche 2' of the active travel proposals to be funded by Government in response to the Covid crisis. Government has not agreed to fund all the schemes Reading had proposed so choices will have to be made. The schemes are expected to go for local consultation in February or March 2021 - aim is to select schemes that can be funded and delivered by government deadline of March 2022 – so we must watch out for the consultation and take part. [Active travel and social distancing - Reading Borough Council](#)

### **Reading Golf Course – plans for at least 260 houses in Caversham:**

A planning application (Number: 200713) was submitted to Reading Borough Council for a development of at least 260 houses on Reading Golf Course off Kidmore End Road, Caversham, with an allocation for 570+ cars. It is opposed by Keep Emmer Green (KEG) <https://www.keepemmergreen.com/> . ... their website carries a good analysis of the issues with links to documents etc. The application has now been withdrawn but a re-application is expected.

An objection addressing Air Quality, Transport, and Climate Change was submitted for Reading FoE – see <http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Documents/Objections%20to%20Reading%20Planning%20Application%20200713%20form%20Reading%20FoE.pdf> and summary in previous newsletter.

It was good to see that the Council's officer comments on the planning application supported many of our concerns, particularly on air quality and congestion at the proposed new roundabout in Emmer Green. To see their comments go to [Reading Borough Council Online Planning](#) and enter 200713 and skip to page 12 (last page) of 'View Plans and Documents' and see 'consultee comments'. Reading FoE did not comment on tree planting proposals to replace the 118 proposed to be felled ... the 'consultee comments' are good on this too.

### **Reading Climate Emergency Strategy:**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> November the final version of the revised strategy was approved by the Policy Committee. Download from Agenda at <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=3386>

More information from Reading Climate Action Network at [Reading Climate Action Network — Reading CAN](#) This website has opportunities for both individuals and groups to sign up to the network. Should we sign up ... as individuals or a group ... and as a group become a 'delivery partner'?

### **Local Transport Strategy Revision:**

RBC's post-consultation version was expected to go to committee in 2020 but has not appeared yet. Could well be that Covid is both delaying work and creating uncertainty ...

### **All-electric Buses ... for Oxford?**

Government has announced that Coventry and Oxford are developing proposals to become the first parts of the UK to run all-electric bus services. Each area could be awarded up to £50 million to not only replace its entire fleet of buses with all-electric versions, but to also install new infrastructure, such as charging stations, and pay for electric grid updates. [Coventry and Oxford set to be UK's first all-electric bus cities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

### **York planning city-wide electric vehicle charging infrastructure**

York is about the same size as Reading and has recently up-dated its EV charging strategy. Seems to revolve around providing charging points at destinations rather than wider on-street provision.

"By maintaining ownership of a core network we can set user tariffs ensuring that we have control over one of the critical factors in delivering a charging network for all. We are also able to deliver next generation Ultra Rapid facilities that currently have a challenging business case for commercial providers, guaranteeing access for York to next generation infrastructure at the earliest opportunity." [Annex A - EV Public Charging Strategy 19032020.pdf \(york.gov.uk\)](#)

### **FoE review of Government Climate Plans**

In November FoE released this critique of the government's plan [Is the government's 10-point climate plan good enough? | Friends of the Earth](#) – finding it inadequate to address the challenge. Welcomes extension of Green Homes Grant for a year but says it will take a decade ... Critical of proposal to spend £525 million on new nuclear power.

FoE now has a lot of on-line material on local climate actions [Take action | Climate Action \(takeclimateaction.uk\)](#)

### **Reading Climate Festival – two events were ‘sponsored’ by Reading FoE:**

**“Why Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage is Essential to Net Zero”.** Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November 7:30 pm

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says that Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage is essential to preventing catastrophic climate change and predicts it providing 9% of emissions reductions required for Net Zero by 2050.

Some production processes – steel, cement, lime and glass - cannot be decarbonised any other way. CCS is also useful if burning biomass or fossil fuels to supply power when low-carbon sources are not available. Local expert Suzie Ferguson presented the fundamentals of the technology, why it is needed, and described active programmes in UK.

Slides from the presentation are at [http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Documents/CCF\\_CCUS.pdf](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Documents/CCF_CCUS.pdf)

**“Local Transport: Climate Change, Clean Air, and Congestion.”** Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November 3:00 pm

John Booth presented a review of Reading’s emerging fourth ‘Local Transport Plan’ with reference to Transport for the South East’s ‘Strategy’, and the government’s ‘Transport Decarbonisation Plan’.

Slides from the presentation are at [http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Documents/CCF\\_Transport.pdf](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Documents/CCF_Transport.pdf)

### **Environmental Recovery after Brexit – Environment Bill back to Parliament**

Discussion of the Environment Bill returned to Parliament in November after a delay of more than 200 days. May get royal assent by end of March ...

Critics say that it will need **interim**, detailed, legally-binding targets as well as long-term 25-year improvement plans. Needs to place duties on local authorities as well as the Secretary of State.

The proposed Office of Environmental Protection must have powers of enforcement as well as review.

Wildlife Trusts say [Environment Bill - ask your MP to speak up for wildlife \(wildlifetrusts.org\)](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org)

### **Heathrow Expansion:**

FoE and others had celebrated their February 2020 victory in the Court of Appeal – which declared the government’s policy to expand Heathrow illegal because climate change implications had not been properly considered. But this was overturned in December by the Supreme Court finding that when the government policy was determined the government had acted in accordance with its legally-adopted policies which at that time did not call for ‘net zero’ emissions. [Heathrow expansion | Friends of the Earth](#)

Will Rundle, head of legal at Friends of the Earth, said the judgment was no “green light” for airport expansion. “It makes clear that full climate considerations remain to be addressed and resolved at the planning stage. Heathrow expansion remains very far from certain and we now look forward to stopping the third runway in the planning arena.”

### **Stop HS2 Petition:**

The massive drilling machines have arrived from Germany and drilling 10-mile tunnels beneath the Chilterns is expected to start in spring and take three and a half years.

Chris Packham has launched a petition which aims get it debated in Parliament – but will need many more signatures. The petition argues that “HS2 is destroying nature and inflicting suffering on businesses and property owners. Government is investing in an inept and recklessly run project, offering poor value for money. HS2 will not reach Net Zero by 2050 nor help us level up the North. The pandemic has changed how we work forever and invalidated the business case.” [Stop work on HS2 immediately and hold a new vote to repeal the legislation - Petitions \(parliament.uk\)](#)

### **Wokingham Activity Centre – ‘net zero’**

Wokingham is to replace its Dinton Pastures Activity Centre with a new building designed to have low carbon emissions. In December it hosted an on-line ‘built environment networking’ event - which was attended by interested professionals from all over the country – to showcase its efforts.

Wokingham have employed a large team of in-house and sub-contract experts to design for net-zero carbon using techniques including: modular construction; air-sourced heat pumps; solar PV panels. [Dinton Activity Centre: Reds10 part of team working on Wokingham Borough’s first net zero carbon building - Reds10](#)

It is reported that opposition Councillors were critical that it only achieved a BREEAM ‘very good’ standard when ‘excellent’ and ‘outstanding’ ratings are available. [Dinton Activity Centre: Dinton Pastures designs approved | Reading Chronicle](#)

## **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](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**

**Our 2020 AGM scheduled for April 8<sup>th</sup> was postponed so Enrico Petrucco and John Booth will continue in the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively until a meeting can be convened.**

## **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 (currently 6 per year) and information about important events and actions.**

## **Reading FoE Subscriptions – Subscribe NOW for 2020/21**

**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.