

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter January - February 2022

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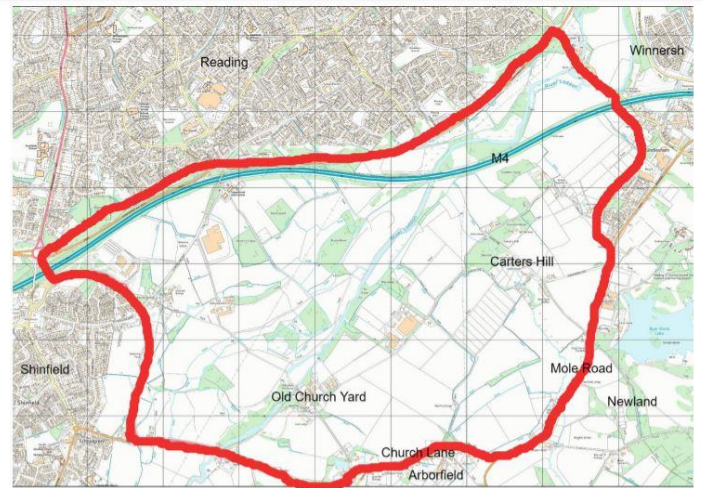
General Meetings: Reading FoE usually meets on the **second Wednesday of each month** in Room 1 upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 8:00 p.m. If Global Café is shut access is via passage to the back of the building. Most meetings discuss plans and general topics, some have a particular focus or guest speakers. Meetings are open to all. We continue to monitor Covid risks, regulations, and guidance, and may cancel (perhaps to go on-line) at short notice. If in doubt check our website www.readingfoe.org.uk or phone or e-mail for confirmation (contacts above).

Wednesday January 12th: General meeting **on-line** – 8:00 pm. If you did not receive Zoom links with this newsletter please request them by e-mail. Topics likely to include research into Reading housing's EPC's (Energy Performance Certificates), possible event(s) for Fair Trade Fortnight, and proposed meeting with RBC and GWR on expected benefits of Green Park station which is scheduled to open this summer.

Wednesday February 9th: Current plan is general meeting at RISC - 8:00 pm – but please check! Agenda later.

'Reading's COP26' in St Laurence church – 6th November – co-organised with GREN and Econet.

Proposals for green-field development in Wokingham – south of Earley (see below)



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

'Positive Money' - Global Justice Now – 7.30pm Thursday 20th January on zoom:

Discussing their campaign for a money and banking system that enables a fair, sustainable and democratic economy
<http://groups.globaljustice.org.uk/reading/>

Climate Income: 28th January – 15:30 to 17:00 - [Climate Income: A kind and fast tool to help curb climate change Tickets, Fri 28 Jan 2022 at 15:30 | Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/climate-income-a-kind-and-fast-tool-to-help-curb-climate-change-tickets-151234567890) - Join Reading Citizens' Climate Lobby and independent guest panellists (Matt Rodda, MP for Reading East; Councillor Ayo Sokale, Deputy Mayor of Reading; and Professor Sir Brian Hoskins, Grantham Institute for Climate Change and the Environment).

Reading Cycle Campaign – has regular monthly meetings and other activities. <https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/>

Repair Cafe – usually third weekend of month - check on their website for times and locations
<http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/projects/reading-repair-cafe/>

Reading Bicycle Kitchen – regular sessions at Unit C10, Weldale Street, RG1 7BX
– see [Reading Bicycle Kitchen](https://www.readingbicyclekitchen.org.uk/)

Green Drinks – usually on the first Tuesday of every month – not sure what is happening during Covid – see
<http://www.greendrinks.org/Berkshire/Reading>

Recent Activities with Reading FoE:

COP26 events in Reading on 6th November:

'March 4 Climate' (not run by us but we had helped to publicise it) was very successful – estimated over 400 people including Matt Rodda MP (Alok Sharma MP was busy elsewhere!). Coverage in local media.

<https://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/19699728.hundreds-march-reading-cop26-climate-protest/>

'Reading's COP26' at St Laurence church (run by Reading FoE with Econet, GREN etc.) went well attracting over 200 people to the stalls and about 130 to the presentations.

We were given this quotation by our main speaker, Richard P Allan, Professor of Climate Science at the University of Reading, Department of Meteorology, and lead author for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 6th assessment report:

"Climate indicators from around the globe are documenting a planet warmed by the inexorable increases in greenhouse gas concentrations caused by human activities. Heat is accumulating in the oceans which along with melt water from glaciers and ice sheets are raising sea levels. Where weather patterns generate heatwaves, droughts and flooding, these are now more severe due to the warmer climate, which is intensifying flows of water out of soils and into storms. The science from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is clear that rapid, strong and sustained cuts in greenhouse gas emissions are essential to limit climate change to tolerable levels."

Attendees gave generously to cover about two thirds of the cost and Reading Climate Action Network is going to cover the rest, so while we 'underwrote' its £350 cost it actually cost us nothing but time and effort.

Questions to RBC about Air Quality – and answers.

In 2017 we petitioned the Council for 'Clean Air Everywhere' to WHO standards by 2020. It hasn't happened so we have gone back to the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee almost every year since to ask about progress.

But 2021 was different in that the WHO has revised its guidelines making compliance even more difficult – guideline annual average concentration for micro-particles PM2.5 reduced from 10 to 5 ug/m³, and for Nitrogen Dioxide from 40 to 10 ug/m³. The Environment Act 2021 establishes a legally binding duty on government to bring forward at least two new air quality targets in secondary legislation by 31 October 2022 – but what will they be and how long before targets lead to action? <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/air-quality-targets>

Reading Council expressed concern about air quality but said that a Clean Air Zone would neither be effective nor affordable and they had no specific plans to reduce traffic levels. Councillor Page said the Council has plans to improve cycling, walking, and the bus service, and was finalising its Electric Vehicle Strategy, all of which will accelerate improvements in air quality – but although overall traffic seemed to be at pre-pandemic levels it was too soon after Covid for the Council to finalise its strategy.

Councillor Page said electric vehicles will continue to contribute to congestion and pollution – he wanted to see fewer private cars on the roads and expected to see central government bring in road pricing in the future in response to loss of fuel duty income as electric vehicle use grew.

For more details see Press Release – which was picked up by Reading Chronicle.

<http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Documents/Reading%20Air%20Quality%20PR%20November%202021.pdf>

Reflections on COP26

FoE has been critical of the outcome of COP26:

- The Pact doesn't get us on track to keep temperatures below 1.5 degrees - it neither delivers the emissions cuts needed from Global North countries, nor the crucial finance needed for Global South countries to pursue low carbon development.
- The Pact fails to deliver on 'loss and damage' - money is badly needed to address the increased risk faced by countries in the Global South and to finance services such as providing compensation for losses
- The complexity and urgency of phasing out fossil fuels isn't properly addressed

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/cop26-3-ways-glasgow-climate-pact-fails-us-and-excludes-justice>

We need to be understanding of the timelines needed to phase out fossil fuels in the Global South. For example India relies on coal for 70% of its energy and requires international financial support to make the transition to clean energy.

FoE post-cop26 film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRS812WgkwU> (Headlines - < 3 minutes).

Wokingham Local Plan – consultation on latest draft:

Planning location of development in Wokingham Borough (east and south of Reading) up to 2036 this consultation runs until 24th January 2022. It would be good if we can agree a response to this. A new town of about 15,000 homes at Grazeley is no longer proposed. Instead an alternative 'garden village' in the area to the south of the M4 known as Hall Farm/Loddon Valley is proposed. Additional smaller scale development is also proposed.

This proposed 'Strategic Development Location' with 4,500 dwellings, of which a minimum of 2,200 dwellings would be completed in the period to 2037/38, would extend into the countryside for about 2km south of Earley between Shinfield and Sindlesham. Landowners Reading University aspire to create an 'International Employment Hub' based around the 'Four Valleys' of Cinema, Heritage, Medical and Nano including the option of a hospital. Transport modelling is looking at a new bridge over the M4 to join Lower Earley Way with or without a new M4 junction.

This development will: increase local population density and demand for resources and travel; reduce local land available for agriculture, forestry, recreation and wildlife; and entail significant carbon emissions to create new buildings and infrastructure. The long distance from major centres and easy access to the M4 is likely to encourage private car use and discourage active travel. Slow rollout of development will delay development of new communities and facilities. [Revised Growth Strategy consultation - Wokingham Borough Council](#)

See the response from Arborfield council available at [Downloads | green4grow](#)

One positive development in the draft is proposed designation of considerable new areas of 'Local Green Space' to the east of Reading including the 'East Reading Mass Rapid Transit' route – although it is proposed that that will still also be designated for a transport route.

Climate Income:

Carbon pricing will be a hard sell in the current environment of rising fuel prices, even if it replaces the current arrangements of levies on electricity bills. But it would help to 'price in' longer-term environmental considerations in a fairer manner - complementing regulations, subsidies, or other measures. The on-line meeting (link on page 1) will be a useful up-date.

A report to CC Committee [Behaviour-change-public-engagement-and-Net-Zero-Imperial-College-London.pdf \(theccc.org.uk\)](#) supports this. It suggests framing it as a 'fee' or 'climate contribution' or 'eco-levy' rather than a tax. "A policy measure with potentially the greatest potential to make the context for public participation visibly fairer and more consistent is a carbon fee with public dividend."

"This combination of carbon fee and public dividend could give voters an immediate connection to, and interest in, the fight against climate change and turn "an otherwise regressive and unpopular carbon tax into a popular and even populist policy that promotes more inclusive economic growth and enables the vast majority of UK citizens to benefit financially from this new climate solution".

Reading Golf Course – plans for development in Caversham:

Keep Emmer Green <https://keepemmergreen.com/> say a third set of proposals have been put forward by Fairfax which respond, in very limited ways, to the overwhelming opposition to the their previous plans for the site but are still at odds with many of the policies in the Local Development Plan. The proposals are largely the same as before and the proposed modifications do not address the fundamental objections. Key changes are:

- 223 new homes (reduction of 34)
- No medical centre - funding instead to improve Emmer Green Surgery
- More tree planting on-site (although it is unclear as to how many existing trees will be felled or put at risk)

Nominally consultation closes on 11th January but we can submit late objections. See <https://keepemmergreen.com/> and previous comments linked from <http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/>

News and links from FoE 'England, Wales and Northern Ireland':

Do take a look at this list of on-line courses and webinars to help shape FoE's future policies <https://takeclimateaction.uk/training/training-and-events>.

And there are lots of archived courses and events here <https://vimeo.com/user/3083868/folder/4885340>

And [Here is a form](#) that you can use to sign up to receive emails specifically for local groups outlining resources and training.

Roundup of development proposals for Reading:

It's hard to keep up with new development plans for Reading, so here's an overview from commentator 'Reading on Thames' - [What's new for 2022... – Reading-on-Thames \(readingonthames.com\)](#)

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/>

Reading FoE Officers

Our 2021 AGM on April 14th elected Enrico Petrucco and John Booth to continue in the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively.

Reading FoE e-mail communications

If you would like to be on our mailing list and receive and join in our day-to-day communications please send an email to info@readingfoe.org.uk to request our GDPR Consent form. We have separate lists for people who only want to receive our newsletter (currently 6 per year) and information about important events and actions, and for people who want to be more involved and communicate directly with other active supporters.

Reading FoE Subscriptions – Subscribe NOW for 2021/22

A donation of £8 annually would be welcome from members but is not required. We're much happier to have an extra pair of hands doing the important stuff.

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.