

Reading Friends of the Earth



Newsletter January – February 2023

For more info: www.readingfoe.org.uk ... or Twitter @ReadingFOE ... or Facebook [Reading Friends of the Earth | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ReadingFriendsOfTheEarth/) ... or email info@readingfoe.org.uk ... or 'phone 07503626167.

General Meetings: Reading FoE usually meet on the **second Wednesday of each month** in Room 1 upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 7:30 p.m. Access from London Street is via passage to the right of the shop-front. Most meetings will be 'hybrid' using Zoom. Please request a Zoom link if you have not received one. Most meetings discuss plans and general topics, some have a particular focus or guest speakers. Meetings are open to all. Meetings may cancel at short notice due to Covid or availability of group officers - if in doubt check our website www.readingfoe.org.uk on the day or phone or e-mail for confirmation (contacts above).

Wednesday January 11th: 7:30 pm. Topics (details below) to include:

- Taking forwards FoE's 'United for Warm Homes' campaign in Reading - see below
- FoE restructuring and revised local groups Charter and licensing agreement.

Wednesday February 8th: 7:30 pm. General meeting. Topics to be arranged. Check for updates on www.readingfoe.org.uk

Reading for Warm Homes:

Progress: We ran a photo-call for the National Day of Action on 3rd December. Good to see so many people outside the Town Hall – thanks to everyone including friends from Greenpeace, XR, Green Party and Global Justice, and to Anne Booth for the photograph!



Publicity:

- Graham had given an interview to Radio Berkshire.
- Reading.Today had put our press release on line <https://rdg.today/reading-for-warm-homes-launches-demanding-government-action-on-fuel-poverty/> . National FoE saw this and said it looked good.
- Thanks to Chris contacting them we now have an entry on Reading Neighbourhood Network's website [Reading for Warm Homes launches its campaign - Reading Neighbourhood Network \(rqneighbours.net\)](https://www.rqneighbours.net)

What next?

Aim is to build a movement of 'local hubs' over two-to-three years to pressure national government for:

- Urgent additional financial support to keep people warm.
- A nationwide insulation programme.
- Permanent fixes to our failed energy system. Powering our homes with cheap and clean renewables.

So we need to engage with groups with different primary interests who will share the aims of this campaign to grow it over 2023. Suggestions welcome! Please get involved. See <https://unitedforwarmhomes.uk/>

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

Wednesday 11th January – 6:30 pm – Transition Towns meeting at the English Language Centre, 6B Church St, Reading RG1 2SB. [Transition Town Reading – Reading Voluntary Action \(rva.org.uk\)](http://TransitionTownReading.org.uk)

Wednesday 25th January – 7:30 pm - ‘Boomerang: How the legacies of empire are breaking Britain’s economy’ – Film at Global Justice Now meeting at RISC.

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

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

Reading Bicycle Kitchen – regular sessions at Unit C10, Weldale Street, RG1 7BX

– see <https://www.readingbicyclekitchen.org/>

Green Drinks – usually on the first Tuesday of every month – see [Reading Green Drinks | Facebook](#)

Friends of the Earth ‘Network Merge’

FoE say “Since 2019 we have supported our Friends of the Earth Local Groups and Climate Action Groups in different ways. So that we can better support our growing network we’ve merged the two network strands together, and our groups are now known as local action groups.”

[Network merge FAQs | Local action \(friendsoftheearth.uk\)](#)

“The website for the merged network is now live. It is at <https://groups.friendsoftheearth.uk/> where you will find all your favourite resources, and administration, guidance and support documents.”

See also [Policies, support and grants | Local action \(friendsoftheearth.uk\)](#) which includes revised Charter and Licence Agreement which we must sign and return by 28th February.

National FoE News:

Groups campaigning for ambitious **Climate Action Plans** came together to discuss how to push councils to take vital and urgent action on fuel poverty and the cost of living crisis. Watch the recording [watch the recording](#)– including excellent presentations from Manchester Friends of the Earth on the Greater Manchester Community Renewables scheme, and Footsteps: Faiths for a Fair low carbon Future, who shared their amazing faith-building energy-reduction project. Also 3 of our 50 inspiring case studies on how councils are acting on climate. [Read more, including 5 published this week.](#)

FoE has a **petition against government proposals to scrap thousands of laws** that protect communities and nature across the UK before the end of 2023, through the Retained EU Law Bill. Please sign!

<https://action.friendsoftheearth.uk/petition/stop-governments-attack-nature-protections>

FoE is running an 8-week on-line **training course on running campaigns** starting on January 25th: [Build People Power and Win Campaigns Registration, Wed 25 Jan 2023 at 19:30 | Eventbrite](#)

Reading Council’s consultation on Rights of Way:

Runs until 19th February – we can consider a group response at January and February meetings but please also make individual responses.

They ask for suggestions:

- Identifying new paths – including creating new paths as part of new developments;
- Reviewing suggestions for historic routes and exploring options with the aim to claim or reinstate them;
- Focussing on removing barriers for cyclists – such as gates and narrow paths, and on paths for those with restricted mobility and visually impaired such as gates, surface, gradient, and width;
- Long-term addition of street-lights on existing dark paths.

Summary: [Have your say on plans to improve Reading’s pathways and get more people walking](#)

Consultation: <http://www.reading.gov.uk/ROWIPConsultation>

Caversham Golf Course

Having got planning permission for 223 new homes with Air Source Heat Pumps the Golf Club have sold to housebuilders Vistry Thames Valley who now say they want to switch most of the homes to gas boilers because the local electricity supplier says it cannot supply enough electricity to the site.

The electricity suppliers should be told to get with the decarbonisation programme – although a switch to ground source heat (as our objection recommended [Reading Friends of the Earth \(readingfoe.org.uk\)](#)) should reduce peak demand and overall electricity use and costs to consumers.

<https://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/23192008.changes-223-home-plan-reading-golf-course-submitted/>

Reading Climate Festival:

Saturday 10th June to Wednesday 21st June – run by Reading Climate Action Network. Big Green Week is moving from autumn to warmer weather! See <https://readingcan.org.uk/events/reading-climate-festival-2023/>

- We have been invited to participate – need ideas for events and actions we can lead. Expression of interest form to be submitted by end January. [Expression of Interest Form.](#)
- Global Justice Now are suggesting a Climate March through town on the first day.

CPRE on housing numbers:

CPRE 2022 state of brownfield report shows that the availability of previously developed land continues to grow across England. In summary, it has found that over 1.2 million homes could be built on 23,000 sites covering more than 27,000 hectares of brownfield. Can't see the detail for Reading or Berkshire.

<https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/brownfield-land-for-1-2-million-homes-lying-dormant-our-report-shows/>

Government proposing changes to National Planning Policy Framework:

Consultation – released on 22nd December - runs until March. Should give local authorities some more control over local development.

Government says it aims to deliver its commitments to building enough of the right homes in the right places with the right infrastructure, ensuring the environment is protected and giving local people a greater say on where and where not to place new, beautiful development. It will also deliver cheaper, cleaner, more secure power in the places that communities want to see onshore wind. A quick look suggests it may do little new on housing numbers and on energy efficiency but Wokingham Councillors have expressed optimism that it may help to reduce pressure for greenfield housing in Wokingham Borough.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-reforms-to-national-planning-policy/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-reforms-to-national-planning-policy>

Met Office Report on UK's Hottest Year on Record:

Study shows human induced climate change made the UK's record-breaking annual temperature around 160 times more likely. Useful (worrying) graphs comparing 2022 with average 1991 to 2020. [Climate change drives UK's first year over 10°C - Met Office](#)

Windfall tax on renewables:

In response to the Chancellor's autumn statement in which he said the government would add a 45% tax on revenue to UK renewable energy generators Thrive Renewables issued a critical comment arguing that the government's approach will incentivise investment in fossil fuels. Fossil fuel extraction companies will pay a 35% tax but with an 80% rebate if they invest in the north sea. <https://www.thriverenewables.co.uk/latest-news/blog/autumn-statement-we-welcome-the-opportunity-to-help-uk-households-with-their-energy-bills/>

Accelerating the transition from fossil fuels and securing energy supplies

Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee calls for faster action on energy security - "those in fuel poverty cannot afford three winters of delay" <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmenvaud/109/summary.html>

Friends of the Earth's early opposition to nuclear power.

John Booth tries to remember the 1970s

People and governments can only take decisions on proposed actions based on the available information at the time. Sometimes the right decision is not to say 'yes' or 'no' to a major project or new strategy but to defer commitment – perhaps while calling for more research or investigation.

FoE as an environmental campaigning organisation aimed – among other things - to ensure that when people and governments take decisions environmental issues are given appropriate weight compared to economic, political and social arguments. Often it is an argument: long-term risk and uncertainty against short-term gain. I see us as operating on the interface between science and politics.

Back in 1975/76 I first became involved in nuclear and energy issues with Portsmouth FoE. As I recall the state-owned Central Electricity Generating Board and British Nuclear Fuels were planning 11 new nuclear power stations around the country and a Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant (THORP) at Windscale/Sellafield.

- The promise of 'electricity too cheap to meter' was far in the past <https://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/energy/2015/11/13/head-too-cheap-to-meter-i-dont-think-so/> .
- Britain was an island made of coal and surrounded by fish.
- North Sea Gas was in use and Oil was coming.
- Arrhenius in 1896 had identified that CO₂ from use of fossil fuels could eventually result in global warming but had predicted it would not be serious for 3,000 years. https://energyeducation.ca/encyclopedia/Discovery_of_the_greenhouse_effect

In 1975 'Fuel's Paradise' was published – an Open University set book on Energy Options for Britain. The author discussed climate risks from a 'greenhouse effect' and from other consequences of ever-growing energy consumption and concluded that more research was needed on how the global climate works. He also criticised the "polarity between the 'hard-line fixers' of the CEGB and the 'eco-nuts' of Friends of the Earth".

In 1976 the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution report on Nuclear Power and the Environment was released. Chapter XI is a 'Summary of principal conclusions and recommendations'. The last recommendations – numbers 42 to 50 (*Chapter XI – page 204 in the book, page 215 in on-line page numbering (link below)*) make it very clear that as recommendation 45 put it "**a major commitment to fission power and a plutonium economy should be postponed as long as possible.**"

So nuclear had a case to answer. I think it was entirely reasonable in 1975 to 1980 to campaign for use of fossil fuels and energy conservation, and for development of renewables, instead of massive rapid expansion of nuclear facilities.

THORP went ahead after the Windscale Inquiry. Despite on-site protests construction of Torness and Heysham 2 power stations started around 1980 and Sizewell B came later. FoE and others did not stop nuclear power but probably helped to slow its implementation and make it safer in operation.

Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution report on Nuclear Power and the Environment is at <https://www.davidsmythe.org/nuclear/flowers%20commission%201976.pdf>

Useful Links and General Information:

Recent links for Reading FoE stalls and campaigns: www.readingfoe.org.uk/links

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/>. Also [Greater Reading Environment Network | Facebook](#)

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 etc.

Our 2022 AGM on April 13th elected Enrico Petrucco and John Booth to continue in the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively. A new Constitution for the group was adopted.

Reading FoE e-mail communications

If you would like to become a supporter 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:

A donation would be welcome from supporters 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 or without 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 registration 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 (if any) payable to Reading Friends of the Earth, and return to the Reading FoE Treasurer, c/o 27 Instow Road, Earley, Reading RG6 5QH. Alternatively request our bank account details.