



**Friends of the Earth**

# Reading Friends of the Earth

## Newsletter July/Aug 2011

For more information see <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading>  
email [info@readingfoe.org.uk](mailto:info@readingfoe.org.uk) or 'phone 0118 9868260.

### Diary:

**General Meetings:** Reading FoE usually meets on the second Wednesday of each month upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 8:00 p.m. – **BUT NOT THIS JULY!**

**July 13th:** – 7:00 p.m. at front of RISC – **Bike Ride** – our annual break from meetings in rooms – a rural ride to a pub to remind ourselves of the lovely countryside around Reading – but if very wet will stay at RISC! Route to be decided by e-mail but likely to be north-west-ish. Lights required for return.

**August 10th:** - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – topics later by e-mail.

### Other (National and Local) FoE Activities:

**Weekend 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> July – Power Up - Queen Mary University, Mile End** - a national FoE training weekend on the planning system and your legal rights to help you improve your local area. See [www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)

**Saturday August 6<sup>th</sup> – Earley Green Fair** – helpers needed for a Reading FoE stall at this event – probably carrying on FoE's 'Big Energy Conversation' which we started at the Waterfest – see below.

**Weekend 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> September – FoE Local Groups Conference** – Nottingham. See [www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)

### Other Activities and Meetings (not run by Reading FoE):

**July 1<sup>st</sup> 4pm to 8pm & July 2<sup>nd</sup> 10 am to 2pm – Proposals for Berkshire Brewery Site** – public exhibition at St Agnes Church Hall, Northumberland Avenue, on proposals to use the site as a Tesco distribution centre.

**July 4<sup>th</sup> – 11:00 to 15:00 - environmental NGO water framework directive network meeting** in Reading – contact [alison.walters@foe.co.uk](mailto:alison.walters@foe.co.uk) for details.

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### Home Energy Workshops

Over thirty people gathered at RISC in London Street on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June to learn how to take advantage of the 'Clean Energy Cashback' scheme for solar power and to save money – and energy – through insulation, draught-proofing, and improved energy management.

Rachel Eden, Lead Councillor for Housing and Neighbourhoods, opened the meeting, saying "The new Labour administration takes the issues of climate change and fuel poverty very seriously. We will continue to improve the energy use of our own properties as well as to support residents and community groups in finding ways to improve the energy use of their own homes."



*Councillor Eden opening the meeting. (Photo: P. Harper)*

Emily Tomalin from Thames Valley Energy discussed her experience with electricity-generating solar panels. The 'Clean Energy Cashback' scheme now pays an index-linked bonus of 43.3 pence per unit of electricity generated when panels are fitted to a home.

Consultant Andy Smale discussed the benefits of many energy-saving techniques and there was particular interest in Dan Browne's advice on insulating older properties with solid walls using internal and external wall cladding.

A video of a home Dan helped to improve was shown and is available for view at <http://www8.open.ac.uk/platform/news-and-features/ou-lecturer-how-eco-renovate-your-home>

After the initial presentations the meeting broke up into specialist workshops on the three topics.

It is hoped to help people take their interest forward by providing more information and facilitating informal working groups on the issues – anyone who missed the meeting is welcome to get in touch.

The organising groups – Reading Energy Pioneers, Reading Friends of the Earth, and Transition Towns Reading – were acting as members of the Greater Reading Environmental Network and were helped by a Community Grant from Reading Borough Council.

## **Waterfest**

Despite some intense rain, and consequent diminished crowds, we had a good day at the Waterfest on 18<sup>th</sup> June with a steady stream (ouch!) of old friends, new friends, and interested strangers.

The government's **Review of Waste Policy** - which after a year-long and expensive consultation had failed to set effective targets to cut waste – was the subject of a **petition to the Prime Minister** on which we collected 38 signatures. Critically the household waste recycling target was still only 50%. This is the EU legal minimum that the last Government was considering raising. Wales, Scotland and most recently Northern Ireland have pledged to go further. The petition is on line on [http://www.foe.co.uk/what\\_we\\_do/talking\\_half\\_rubbish\\_27167.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/what_we_do/talking_half_rubbish_27167.html)

The petition called for a goal to halve household 'black bag' waste by 2020 to ensure genuine reductions in waste and landfill. This is equivalent to recycling 70% of our waste at current rates of waste generation, but as well as increasing recycling we can meet this goal through more waste prevention and reuse. We're asking for a similar ambition for business waste.

This will reduce climate change emissions and pressure on the natural environment, and also mean less residual waste treatment plants are required.

Two good points in the new policies were:

- No centrally-imposed weekly general waste collections - which would reduce recycling rates - collection strategies to be a matter for local authorities
- Support for anaerobic digestion - a great renewable source of energy from food waste.

We also interviewed 46 people for responses to the '**Big Energy Conversation**' survey – FoE wants to find out public attitudes to options for our energy future before launching a major new energy campaign in September. See [http://www.foe.co.uk/community/campaigns/climate/plug\\_us\\_in\\_31080.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/community/campaigns/climate/plug_us_in_31080.html) . Here are our results:

<b>1 In your view, what is the most important energy issue facing the UK today?</b>	<b>Percentage Response</b>
The price of energy and fuel	11
Dependence on imported oil and gas	24
Availability and supply of oil and gas	17
The safety of nuclear power plants	20
The impact of our energy system on climate change	24
Something Else or Don't Know	4

<b>2 The UK needs to invest billions in coming decades to keep lights on and reduce dependency on oil. Where do you think the most money should go?</b>	<b>Percentage Response</b>
Nuclear power	13
Power from the sun, waves or wind	46
Making energy savings in homes, business and industry	35
Capturing carbon pollution from coal and gas plants	0
Something Else or Don't Know	7

On both these questions people found it difficult to pick one priority – most seemed to think several issues and initiatives were important. Only one person recorded support for carbon capture and storage and they were disqualified for ticking two other options.

<b>3 Do you think that more green energy should be generated locally e.g. through solar panels on roofs or wind farms owned by councils or communities?</b>	<b>Percentage Response</b>
Yes	93
No	4
Don't Know	2

A somewhat loaded question ... but some people still said 'no'!

### **Energy Bill:**

The Government's Energy Bill is a key opportunity for the Government to cut massively the energy waste in our homes and communities. At the Home Energy Workshops meeting Reading FoE collected signatures on a petition to MPs in an attempt to influence the Committee stage of the Bill which ended on 21<sup>st</sup> June.

The Bill has a lot of useful content, including the introduction of the 'Green Deal' to provide capital funding for improvements to energy efficiency of properties, but Friends of the Earth were concerned that the Bill is too weak to deliver the change needed to end fuel poverty and sufficiently to cut carbon emissions, so national staff had asked local groups to encourage our MPs to get involved to support three amendments:

#### **1) Councils and community action on climate change**

Create clarity about council action on climate change: Ministers should ask the independent Committee on Climate Change to advise on what councils need to do in their patch to help meet UK Climate Change Act targets  
Ensure local climate action is a priority for councils: councils should have a duty to draw up local climate change plans – showing how they will roll out green policies in line with the expert advice

#### **2) Warm homes for all**

The 'Warm Homes' amendment for a comprehensive Government energy efficiency strategy for housing, sufficient to meet carbon and fuel poverty targets.

#### **3) Minimum efficiency standard for private rented homes**

Introduce a minimum standard for private rented accommodation in 2016 - in line with the official fuel poverty target  
Protect tenants demanding energy efficiency improvements from eviction  
Increase the minimum standard over time

### **South Reading Development:**

In 2009/10 we had sponsored two separate teams of students to look at options for the "Courage Brewery" site and the old "Digital Pyramids" site between the old A33 and the A33 Relief Road, now known as "Worton Grange". Both are interesting because of proximity to the M4 – what 'green' options are there for a site with excellent motorway access? The reports on the two sites are complete, see <http://www.anjoro.plus.com/downloads/southreading.doc>.

Latest news (see event in Diary above) is that Tesco are proposing to turn the Brewery site into a massive warehousing distribution complex, and the Worton Grange site already has planning permission for warehousing.

Warehouses have presumably got to go somewhere, and a motorway junction is a fairly sensible place, and the workforce – and hence commuting – would be less than if the sites were used for multi-story offices. However these two sites have unique potential for provision of renewable energy, district heating, and a public transport interchange as well as other possible uses and it remains to be seen if these can be delivered along with commercial warehousing.

### **Climate Berkshire:**

Climate Berkshire is a partnership of the Local Authorities and other key organizations from across Berkshire. Working to address the challenges and opportunities associated with climate change at a strategic level across the County, Climate Berkshire has been connected to the new Local Enterprise Partnership and is responsible for delivering the Low Carbon Green Economy element of the partnership.

At our May meeting John Halladay, who represents Berkshire FoE network on Climate Berkshire, said he was encouraged by the level of practical activity by organisations such as Groundwork and the Primary Care Trust that was discussed at the meetings, and at the cross-authority co-operation that was developing.

Thames Valley Energy had produced a study on renewable energy potential and there was a proposal to fund research on how to achieve behavioural change.

An interesting set of presentations from a recent TVE Fuel Poverty conference is at <http://www.tvenergy.org/fuel-poverty-iea-conference.htm>

### **Rushy Mead Turbines:**

As reported in the last newsletter this application to build four turbines south of the M4 between Sindlesham and Shinfield was turned down by Wokingham's planning committee. Latest news is that the developers have until November to decide whether to appeal against the decision, and have not yet decided whether or not to do so. [http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Rushy\\_Mead.doc](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Rushy_Mead.doc) and <http://www.pfr.co.uk/rushymead/>

### **High Speed Rail – HS2:**

Various organisations have declared opposition to the proposals for a high speed rail link from London to Birmingham, and then further north, which is currently under consultation. It will cost billions of pounds, it will damage wildlife sites, its carbon implications are uncertain, and it is arguable that other transport options could have far better economic and environmental effects.

FoE, CPRE and the Wildlife Trusts all support 'A Charter for High Speed Rail' <http://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-do/transport/rail/update/item/1683-a-charter-for-high-speed-rail> which calls for a national transport strategy, better future-proofing of big transport proposals, effective public participation and a more strategic approach to minimising adverse impacts.

FoE's Press Release is at [http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/press\\_releases/high\\_speed\\_rail\\_07042011.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/press_releases/high_speed_rail_07042011.html)

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) say the proposed High Speed 2 train route will cut through 18 wildlife sites locally, doing irreparable damage, <http://www.bbowl.org.uk/content.asp?did=26682> They provide suggested responses to the consultation's questions.

A public consultation is underway – see <http://www.hs2.org.uk/assets/x/77665>. It closes on 15<sup>th</sup> July so you have a few weeks to respond. You can either respond via the BBOWT website, or via <http://highspeedrail.dft.gov.uk/>

### **Report on SEFS AGM by Chris Burden:**

South East Forum for Sustainability <http://www.sefs.org.uk> was delighted to host a stimulating General Meeting on 15th June 2011 (room courtesy of the Ethical Property Company in Development House). Chris Burden was delegated by Reading FoE to attend.

Ian Hepburn, Chair of SEFS, introduced things by reviewing the financial/organisational position of SEFS. After funding seemed to have run out at the end of last year, the Environment Agency and the Wildlife Trusts have both stumped up cash for certain work which will carry SEFS forward, but only until March 2012.

Later, Chris Corrigan explained the SEFS 2011/12 work programme which has 3 strategic aims:

- To increase SEFS' policy influence by establishing stronger links with relevant organisations and networks.
- To co-ordinate SEFS' input to key policy areas and build relationships with relevant sub-regional bodies to ensure sustainability policies and actions are embedded at strategic level.
- To establish secure funding and income streams to ensure SEFS can service and develop its membership and achieve its objectives.

There were also presentations on SEFS' work relating to HS2, and a timely update on the Localism Bill which goes to Committee stage in the Lords next week.

In July SEFS expect to see the Government's new National Planning Policy framework – this is now THE crucial document to test whether Sustainable Development stands for anything or if all the signs so far are to be realised...i.e. that planning is simply being tilted toward pro growth development of indeterminate quality and quantity...

The afternoon focused on the implementation in the South East of the Water Framework Directive and an update on the fascinating case studies, toolkit and Climate Change Adaptation Action Plans that have come out of the Green and Blue Space Adaptation project. All the presentations can be found below:

Presentations:

SEFS Work programme

<http://www.sefs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SEFS-Work-programme.pdf>

HS2 Presentation

<http://www.sefs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SEFS-GM-HS2-Presentation.pdf>

Friends of the Earth Localism

<http://www.sefs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Localism-presentation-general.pdf>

Water Framework Directive

[http://www.sefs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WFD\\_Presentation\\_15\\_06\\_11.pdf](http://www.sefs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WFD_Presentation_15_06_11.pdf)

Green & Blue Space Adaptation (GRaBS)

[http://www.sefs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SEFS-presentation\\_15June2011.pdf](http://www.sefs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SEFS-presentation_15June2011.pdf)

Further information on:

1) The Localism Bill can be found on

[http://www.foe.co.uk/community/campaigns/rights/localism\\_bill\\_26404.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/community/campaigns/rights/localism_bill_26404.html)

and the 15<sup>th</sup> June announcement by CLG on the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' is at

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/presumptionfavour/>

2) The Water Framework Directive can be found at

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/33362.aspx>;

the South East River Basin District Area information at

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/40239.aspx>;

and the Thames River Basin District Area at

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/33128.aspx>

3) The Green & Blue Space Adaptation project can be found at

<http://www.grabs-eu.org/news.php>

including the Adaptation Action Plans & Policy Statements; Expert Papers; Policy Guidelines & Briefing Papers

and the GRaBS Adaptation Action Planning Toolkit at

<http://www.ppgis.manchester.ac.uk/grabs/start.html>

## Useful Websites etc.:

[www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk](http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk)  
[www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)

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

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

Doorstep collection of WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) service in Reading being offered by Midex Reverse Technologies <http://www.midex-rt.com/>

True Food Co-op: [www.truefood.coop](http://www.truefood.coop) now with new shop in Emmer Green!

Reading Borough Council Waste and Recycling:  
<http://www.reading.gov.uk/environmentandplanning/wasteandrecycling/>

South East Forum for Sustainability: <http://www.sefs.org.uk>

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)

Local Food Directory, with links: [http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk/Local\\_Economy.htm](http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk/Local_Economy.htm)

RISC <http://www.risc.org.uk/readingfairtrade/>

## Reading FoE Officers

At our AGM on April 13<sup>th</sup> 2011 Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were 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 join in our day-to-day communications please email [info@readingfoe.org.uk](mailto: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 2011/12

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 £7.00 / £4.00 (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.