

# Reading Friends of the Earth Newsletter Jul/Aug 2013



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

Change Your World – FoE Local Groups Newsletter:  
[http://www.foe.co.uk/community/resource/change\\_your\\_world.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/community/resource/change_your_world.html)

## Diary:

**General Meetings:** Reading FoE usually meets on the second Wednesday of each month upstairs in Room 1 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.

**July 10th:** – 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – future plans for the Bee Cause and summer events.

**August 14th:** - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting**

## Other Reading FoE Activities and Meetings:

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July** – stall at **Caversham Festival** - Christchurch Meadows on the north bank of the River Thames between Caversham Bridge and Reading Bridge. Please volunteer to help – especially in the afternoon.  
<http://www.readipop.co.uk/cavershamfestival2012/CavershamFestival/Welcome.html>

**Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> August** – *in planning, details by e-mail, please volunteer to help* - **Bee Walk and stall in Caversham Court Gardens** – linked to Mikron Theatre Company play 'Beyond the Veil' <http://www.mikron.org.uk/veilBlurb.php>

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August** – stall at **Earley Green Fair** – 10:00 to 15:00 – between Beech Lane and the lake.

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

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> July** – 'Drill Baby Drill' - Keith Taylor, MEP for the South East, is taking the new film about fracking on a tour of the region. 6:45 PM at RISC. Tickets to the screening are free but space is limited so please book in advance here: <http://drillbabydrillreading.eventbrite.co.uk/>

**Green Drinks at RISC** - is on the first Tuesday of every month. Come along to the Global Café from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m. to meet like-minded people for a chat over a drink or two. <http://www.greendrinks.org/berkshire/reading>

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## The Bee Cause

June was a busy month in Reading with stalls at the MERL Spring Fair (thanks to Roger Sym who has helped to create ten bee-friendly plots with different types of habitat - pictured) and at the Reading University BioBlitz and the Waterfest. Lots of campaign postcards were forwarded to FoE to help to put pressure on the government.

Stuart Roberts, who was one of the authors of the report FoE has based its bee campaigning on, was at the BioBlitz on 8<sup>th</sup> June. He had recently been doing radio interviews in London about Bees.



We were particularly pleased to learn that Rob Wilson MP (Reading East) had attended the 'Bees Tea' in Westminster on 16th May and had signed the statement calling for a National Bee Action Plan.

He commented in his newsletter that "Bee-lovers have taken over 261 actions to save bees in Reading East as part of Friends of the Earth's Bee Cause campaign. Actions include planting bee friendly seeds, signing petitions and building 'bee hotels' to replace lost natural habitat."

MERL Stall and veg. plot – photo: Roger Sym.

FoE reported good progress from its "National Bee Summit" on 28<sup>th</sup> June. Environment Minister Lord de Mauley announced that the government will urgently review the decline of bees - leading to a "national pollinator strategy".

FoE Executive director Andy Atkins welcomed Lord de Mauley's announcement but called for specific commitment from the Government - in particular:

- An action timetable commencing spring 2014 when bees wake up from hibernation.
- Measurable targets for reversing the loss of bees and other pollinators.
- The plan must involve other Government Departments, not just DEFRA.

So we intend to continue to campaign asking local people to sign our petition cards to the Prime Minister.

For more information see FoE's Bee Cause Campaign Hub at <http://forum.foe.co.uk/campaignhubs/index.php/page,page686.html>

### **Clean British Energy and the Energy Bill:**

In early June MPs defeated – but by only 12 votes - an amendment that would have required a decarbonisation target to be set in 2014. Sad to say that all our local MPs voted against the amendment. A decision in 2014 - before the next election – would give early encouragement to business investment. The Climate Change Committee has called for a target for carbon intensity of electricity generation to be 50 gCO<sub>2</sub>/kWh in 2030 compared to a current figure of around 500 gCO<sub>2</sub>/kWh, arguing that this would help to release £110 billion investment in energy infrastructure.

The fact that the Government faced a rebellion - from Liberal Democrat and Conservative MPs, as well as the Labour Party fully supporting a clean power target – is a major victory for Friends of the Earth and other groups working on this topic.

On June 5th, the Energy Bill moved from the House of Commons into the House of Lords. The Second Reading debate on June 18th was dominated, once again, by discussions about a decarbonisation target.

On June 26th Lord Oxburgh - a well-respected cross-bench Peer, ex-chair of Shell, but keenly concerned about climate change - introduced an amendment to the Bill for a clean power target and this was debated on 2<sup>nd</sup> July but was not voted on - it's likely that a vote will be held in the Lords in October. Once again, broad cross-party support was expressed for a clean power target - from Labour, Lib Dem, Conservative and cross-bench Peers.

The debate also drew out a number of climate sceptic Peers, such as Lord Nigel Lawson (head of the sceptic Global Warming Policy Foundation) and Viscount Matt Ridley (a big proponent of shale gas, who presided over the collapse of Northern Rock).

FoE have put together a round-up of the Clean British Energy campaign, with lots of photos and a timeline - you can see it here: <http://forum.foe.co.uk/campaignhubs/MGalleryItem.php?id=1190> You can view the topic in the Hub by following this link: <http://forum.foe.co.uk/campaignhubs/index.php?topic=2017.0>

### **European Emissions, Energy and Renewables Targets:**

Energy and Climate Change Secretary Ed Davey is urging the EU to set its 2030 greenhouse gas emissions reduction target at 50% relative to 1990 if there is a global agreement in 2015, and to 40% reduction if there is no global deal. MEPs have called for the proportion of renewable energy to be 30% by 2030 but Ed Davey has argued against this saying that member states should be allowed a flexible approach to reducing emissions saying that an EU target would be 'unflexible and unnecessary'. The Renewable Energy Association says the UK is unlikely to achieve its 2020 target of 15% of energy from renewables.

Overall EU emissions in 2011 were 18.4% below 1990 baseline, and for the UK the figure was 28.8%, but in 2012 UK emissions from fossil fuel use rose by 3.9%

### **Renewable Heat Incentive:**

The Renewable Heat Incentive scheme has been running for nearly 18 months and uptake has been very poor in certain non-domestic sectors. In 12 months to April 2013 expenditure on both small (up to 100 kW) ground source heat pumps and solar thermal (up to 200 kW) was only 1% of expected levels, and expenditure on large biomass boilers only reached 23% of forecast. Government is consulting on increasing the tariff rates.

In contrast expenditure on small- and medium-sized biomass boilers exceeded expectations and subsidy level for medium-sized boilers will be reduced. <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/increasing-the-use-of-low-carbon-technologies/supporting-pages/renewable-heat-incentive-rhi>

Domestic installations of heat pumps, biomass and solar thermal are supported by vouchers from the Energy Saving Trust under the Renewable Heat Premium Payment Scheme – payment levels have been increased.

### **Reading Climate Change Strategy:**

Reading Climate Change Partnership's revision of the Climate Change Strategy is making progress. The main document consists of a review of opportunities to make progress from which 'Strategic Priorities' for action over the period to 2020 are derived.

The current draft of this document goes to RBC's Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee for approval on 9<sup>th</sup> July. Preparation of the detailed Action Plans is still in progress. Documents can be found under Item 8 of <http://www.reading.gov.uk/meetings/details/3574/>.

### **GREM Meeting:**

The recent GREM Members' meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> June heard presentations about the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership, Earley Environmental Group, TCV, Reading Town Meal, and The Bee Cause. GREM Minutes are on this link [http://www.grem.org.uk/resources/GREMmemberminutes190613\\_v1.doc](http://www.grem.org.uk/resources/GREMmemberminutes190613_v1.doc)

### **State of Nature Report:**

The 'State of Nature' report by a consortium of wildlife organisations has found that 60% of UK species are in decline and 10% are under threat. <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/2013/05/22/state-nature-60-uk-species-decline-groundbreaking-study-finds>

In his introduction David Attenborough says: "This report highlights what we have lost, and what we are still losing, it also gives examples of how we – as individuals, organisations, governments – can work together to stop this loss, and bring back nature where it has been lost."

Some of the 'headlines' of the report are:

- Half of the species assessed have shown strong changes in abundance or distribution, indicating that recent environmental changes are having a dramatic impact on the nature of the UK's land and seas. There is also evidence to suggest that species with specific habitat requirements are faring worse than generalist species that are better able to adapt to a changing environment.
- "A new Watchlist Indicator has been developed to measure how conservation priority species are faring, based on 155 species for which we have suitable data. This group contains many of our most threatened and vulnerable species, and the indicator shows that their overall numbers have declined by 77% in the last 40 years, with little sign of recovery.
- "Of more than 6,000 species that have been assessed using modern Red List criteria, more than one in ten are thought to be under threat of extinction in the UK. A further 885 species are listed as threatened using older Red List criteria or alternative methods to classify threat.
- The state of the UK's butterflies (2011) concluded that 72% of species had decreased over the previous ten years, including common "garden" butterflies that had declined by 24%.
- The state of the UK's birds (2012) reported that the UK has lost in the region of 44 million breeding birds since the late 1960s.
- In 2012, Our Vanishing Flora looked at the extinction of plants from counties across the UK in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and found widespread losses. In 16 counties, one plant species went extinct every other year.
- The state of Britain's mammals (2011) highlighted the decline of hedgehogs, the ongoing loss of red squirrels and the recovery of otters.

## Useful Websites etc.:

Friends of the Earth 'England, Wales and Northern Ireland' [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/>

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)

Pangbourne and Whitchurch Sustainability Group (PAWS) <http://www.pawsg.com/>

True Food Co-op: [www.truefood.coop](http://www.truefood.coop) - Winner Best Retail Initiative BBC Food & Farming Awards 2011 - shop in Emmer Green and local markets.

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

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

At our AGM on April 10<sup>th</sup> 2013 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 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 and information about important events and actions.

## Reading FoE Subscriptions – Subscribe NOW for 2013/14

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.