

Reading Friends of the Earth Newsletter Jul/Aug 2014



For more information: <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading> or www.readingfoe.org.uk
email 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

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. **But not this July**. Most meetings include discussion of general topics – some have a particular focus or guest speakers. Meetings are open to all.

July 22nd: – ‘Rural Ride’ to The Crown at Playhatch http://www.brakspear.co.uk/our_pubs/pub_page/84/crown . Brakspear have encouraged their pubs to plant Bee Worlds – flowers to help pollinators – we'll go to take a look and perhaps get publicity ... To cycle from Reading meet Michael in London Street outside RISC at 7:00. Or meet at the pub at about 8:00 – anyone needing a lift please get in touch. Michael says: “The route I'm thinking of is 7 miles outbound, mainly quiet roads, with a climb up into Emmer Green. If that turns out to be a bit daunting, there look like a couple of possible short cuts to chop off a mile or two, but I can't tell from the map if they are roads or farm tracks.” The return would be fairly flat and direct along the Henley Road but lights will be required.

August 13th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – General Meeting – hope to include reports from members who went to FoE's 'Base Camp' conference in June and to their 'Nature Away Day' in May.

Other Reading FoE Activities and Meetings:

Saturday 12th July: - Reading FoE stall at **Caversham Festival** – 12:00 to 17:00 - helpers needed – details by e-mail. Featuring new 'Bee & Bee' campaign material as well as anti-fracking petition cards.

Saturday 2nd August: - Reading FoE stall at **Earley Green Fair** – 10:00 to 15:00 - helpers needed – as above.

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

Sunday 20th July – Repair Cafe – Unit 5 Weldale St, Reading, RG1 7BX – 12:00 to 17:00.
<https://www.facebook.com/ReadingRepairCafe> (August date not known ...)

Green Drinks at RISC - is on the first Tuesday of every month (**except this 5th August when there is a rural walk**). 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>

Fracking at Waterfest

Reading is in an area proposed for licensing for fracking. The nearest currently licensed site is near Windsor. We ran a stall at the Reading Waterfest on June 14th asking people to sign postcards to the Leader of their Council saying why they don't want fracking in their town. This nationally-co-ordinated FoE campaign will run for a while
http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/issues/fracking_background_information_33157

Reasons for concern suggested were:

- It risks contaminating my drinking water;
- It keeps UK hooked on dirty fossil fuels that contribute to climate change;
- It is highly unlikely to lower my fuel bills;
- It risks taking investment and jobs away from renewable energy;
- It will puncture the countryside with wells and drilling rigs.

While we met some people who shared our concerns people are not as instinctively supportive as they are for the Bee Cause, and some seemed to have great faith in fracking. At present this faith is certainly not well-justified. Lord Browne of Madingley, former chief of BP and now chairman of Cuadrilla, has said it will take five years and the drilling of 20 to 40 fracking wells to judge whether the UK has a viable shale gas industry. Even if the resource is there and extractable we think the government will set tax levels to maximise their revenue and companies will set prices up to levels in the European market area.

Thanks to Anne, Gloria, Michael, Chris, John and Enrico for help.

Fracking Information:

For some very detailed information on fracking there is Corporate Watch's recent document 'Towards the Ends of the Earth' – downloadable from <http://www.corporatewatch.org/>

Alternatively Prof. Chris Rhodes' presentation to a Cafe Scientifique on the Isle of Wight (see <http://ergobalance.blogspot.com/> posting for January 23rd 2014)

Bee Cause Progress

We expected the Government to launch its National Pollinators Strategy this July but it is now expected to be in October ... after the autumn planting season. This summer FoE has launched its "Bee & Bee" materials to help people provide shelter and food and water for bees and other pollinators.

Again we have postcards for the public to sign, and this time practical guidance to give away in leaflet form. People who commit to taking action for bees will receive free guidance from FoE.

FoE are calling for a 'Blooming Marvellous' fortnight of action from 12th-27th July - which will tie in with both the Caversham Festival stall and our bike ride to The Crown. Also a 'planting day' on 20th September which will be just after a planned stall at Ufton Court on 14th.

For more details see Summer Action Guide on <http://tinyurl.com/beeguide14>

Making hay while the sun shines ...

Some of us went to see an exhibition about a proposed 12-14 MW Solar Farm on a 25 hectare site immediately south of M4 and to the west of Reading-Basingstoke railway – just north of Amners Farm Road and Pingewood Road south. They claim it would produce enough renewable energy to power around 2,800 homes – this refers to total electricity consumption of an average home.

The developers are Haymaker Energy <http://www.haymakerenergy.co.uk/solar.html> who said they have one 8.8 MW site near Hailsham and over 5 other sites in development/planning. They are currently consulting local people and talking to the Councils and hope to install the panels in 2015.

Site would be rented from Englefield Estates (the family estate of Richard Benyon MP). It is a landfilled site currently used for grazing – we were told it is categorised as 'Grade 4' ('poor') agricultural land, so of little value. There is a local connection to the grid (cables pass over site) which will reduce costs.

The planning application (to West Berkshire) will be for 30 years – expected to be supported by Renewables Obligation Certificate funding for 20 years only, although maybe will be operating under the new 'contracts for difference' regime if they are delayed ...

They claim there will be plenty of room for wildlife and there will be sheep-grazed grassland between the panels.

... and in Reading ...

Meanwhile the Reading Climate Action website reports the 2,219 solar panels installed by Reading Council in March 2012 on roofs across the town generated a total of 436,801 kWh of energy. This helped reduce electricity bills at 14 schools, 2 community centres, 4 businesses and 15 sheltered housing units.

In addition 609 householders have fitted panels on their own homes since the feed in tariff was introduced in April 2010 and Reading Council has a new project to fit solar panels on council houses.

<http://www.readingclimateaction.org.uk/news-events/news/2014/jun/record-year-solar>

The Natural Environment in Berkshire: Biodiversity Strategy 2014 – 2020

Berkshire Local Nature Partnership (BLNP) is running a consultation on this document until late August.

<http://berkshirelnp.org/index.php/what-we-do/strategy/biodiversity-action-plan/consultation>

The BLNP aims to be a 'force' and 'single voice' representing the best interests of the natural environment throughout the county of Berkshire.

They recognise the national target of 'a net gain for biodiversity' and want to achieve landscape-scale improvements in biodiversity.

The draft document is full of interesting facts and figures and should help individuals and authorities to value and manage Berkshire's wildlife, 'green infrastructure' and 'natural capital'. There are probably some sections where it could be strengthened or improved ... particularly on climate change and pollution from agriculture ... so that it can be most effective in negotiations with local and national government and the Local Economic Partnership.

Readybike Scheme:

The new bike hire scheme has been launched in Reading. The distinctive purple and orange bikes are located across 27 docking stations in Reading. Two more – on the south side of Reading Station and at Earley Station - will be operational later this summer. There seem to be few docking stations to the west of the town centre ... <http://www.readybike.co.uk/LocationsMap.aspx>

For members, use of ReadyBike is free for half an hour at the start of every rental and then £1 an hour after that, with a maximum rental cap of £4. Annual membership costs £50. <http://www.readybike.co.uk/Info.aspx>

For people who do not want to be members, ReadyBike is also available for occasional or one-off use by users registering their details online. The tariff for non-members is the same as that for members (£1 an hour) but they do not get the first 30 minutes of every rental free and the maximum rental charge is £7.

Once you've signed up (on-line or by 'phone) you'll receive a membership number and PIN. You key in your membership number and PIN at any of the docking stations and select a bike to rent. You can return the bike to any station, not just the one you rented it from.

According to Adrian Lawson, chair of the Reading Cycle Campaign, the scheme cost £1.2 million and is a 'quick fix' when "The roads and cycle lanes around Reading are appalling". <http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/bike-scheme-quick-fix-says-7251245> The Cycle Campaign newsletter regrets "it took such a large chunk of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and does nothing to improve the journeys of the 2,000 or so people who cycle each day on their own bikes" but concedes "On the other hand it offers a great opportunity for people who don't cycle regularly or haven't cycled before."

Reading FoE are thinking of giving the scheme a try one evening this summer ...

University installing Combined Heat and Power:

Reading University is building a new gas-powered 'Energy Centre' – producing heat and electricity - which they believe will make more efficient use of gas – and thereby reduce emissions - by generating 15% of the electricity they use in a CHP plant. <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/staffportal/news/articles/sp-wkup.aspx>

Government Schemes for Domestic Renewable Heat and Business Energy Efficiency.

Two new schemes are coming in:

Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (DRHI) scheme opened on 9th April and DECC hope around 36,000 homes will benefit this year, and more next year. It rewards people switching to renewable heating systems with quarterly payments for seven years. Technologies covered are: biomass; air sourced heat pumps; ground sourced heat pumps; and solar thermal (flat plate or evacuated tube).

Before applying you must: have had a Green Deal Assessment carried out (unless you are self-build); install loft and cavity wall insulation (if recommended by GD Assessment); and get an updated Energy Performance Certificate. In general payment will be based on estimated demand, not measured output, and will range from 7.3 to 19.2 pence per kWh. <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/increasing-the-use-of-low-carbon-technologies/supporting-pages/renewable-heat-incentive-rhi>

Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS) is UK Implementation of European Energy Efficiency Directive. Larger companies and institutions (> 250 employees, turnover > £42million) will have to have an energy efficiency audit covering buildings, transport and industrial processes every four years. Unfortunately they will not be required to take action on it, but at least it will have their attention. Compliance is likely to be required by 5th December 2015.

TTIP opposed by World Development Movement (WDM):

Opposition to the EU's proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership is being led by WDM and others. <http://www.wdm.org.uk/trade/uk-wide-protests-planned-ahead-july-trade-negotiations> Reading's WDM group has an action in Broad Street on 12th July – see <http://www.gren.org.uk/Events.cfm> 12th July.

Reading FoE members took the argument against this to some of the recent European Election Hustings meetings in Reading. Our particular concern was the proposed 'investor-state-dispute-settlement' mechanism (ISDS) which could be used to set aside environmental measures introduced by governments if they reduce foreign companies' profits. This mechanism bypasses and overrides states' domestic judicial systems. The system can only be used by companies suing states, not vice versa. Cases are decided not by judges but by a small group of lawyers paid by the hour, who have a vested interest in encouraging companies to open more cases to increase their own incomes.

Useful Websites etc.:

Friends of the Earth 'England, Wales and Northern Ireland' www.foe.co.uk

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

Reading Climate Action Network - <http://www.readingclimateaction.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

True Food Co-op: www.truefood.coop - shop in Emmer Green.

Citizens Committee on Oil Peak And Decline (COPAD) www.copad.org

<http://www.fishonline.org/> gives info on over-fishing, fish to avoid, etc.

www.ejfoundation.org (Environmental Justice Foundation)

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

Reading FoE Officers

At our AGM on April 9th 2014 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 .

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 2014/15

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.