

Reading Friends of the Earth Newsletter July/Aug 2015



For more information: <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading> or www.readingfoe.org.uk
email info@readingfoe.org.uk or 'phone 0118 9868260. Twitter @ReadingFOE

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. Meetings are open to all.

July 8th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – discussion of current campaign areas.

August - date to be confirmed - probably no RISC meeting – expect to be replaced by a trip to a rural pub – by bike for some – please check on website www.readingfoe.org.uk .

Other Activities with Reading FoE:

Saturday 11th July – 11:00 am to c. 5:00 pm – **Caversham Festival** – help needed for FoE stall in Christchurch Meadows - campaigning for solar schools, bees and wildlife. Please get in touch.

Saturday 1st August – 10:00 am to 3:00 pm – **Earley Green Fair** – help needed for FoE stall - location is between Beech Lane and Lakeside (#19b bus route) in Earley. Please get in touch.

Other Activities (not run by Reading FoE):

Wednesday 8th July – **Reading Energy Pioneers** –7:00 to 8:00 at RISC (before RFoE) – plans for community solar.

Saturday 18th July – RFGN- visit to Lower Lovetts Farm –www.readingfoodgrowingnetwork.org.uk

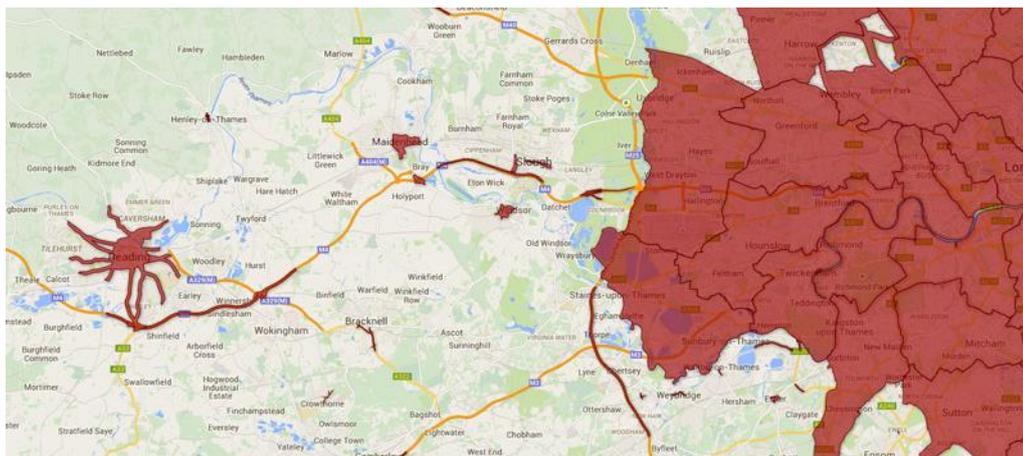
Sunday 19th July – **Repair Café** - 12:00 pm - 4:30 pm @ rLab, Unit C1, Weldale Street, Reading, RG1 7BX

Green Drinks at RISC – usually 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>

Traffic Growth on the M4 – Save the hard shoulder from J3 to J12! – Save the money!

Highways England (formerly Highways Agency) has plans to increase traffic on the M4 by converting the hard shoulder to use as an additional lane, requiring 11 bridges to be replaced, at a cost of up to £862 million.

We object to the use of the hard shoulder on grounds of: reduced safety; increase in traffic affecting noise, air quality and climate change; loss of capacity to cope with accidents; and unnecessary cost.



Map of Air Quality Management Areas.

Defra says AQMAs are “places where the objectives are not likely to be achieved”

Many roads into Reading are AQMAs – more traffic from the M4 won't help!

(Save M4 Hard Shoulder – continued)

Proposal is for a ‘**Smart Motorway**’:

- Gantries, cameras, speed controls etc. – likely to improve safety, reduce congestion, and slightly increase peak hour traffic volume (more traffic can flow safely and smoothly at around 55 mph than if drivers are allowed to try to go at 70 mph) ... and ...
- ‘all lane running’ – there is no hard shoulder, just an additional lane for traffic and ‘refuges’ every 2.5 km – leading to a significant increase in capacity – but breakdowns and accidents must be more likely to cause lane closures.

Air quality is a key issue because the proposals show that it will be made worse by traffic growth and the UK Supreme Court has recently ruled – in response to ClientEarth – that the government must make plans for tackling the UK’s air pollution problem, which has been in breach of EU limits for years and is linked to thousands of premature deaths each year.

Climate change doesn’t get much acknowledgement from Highways England despite a calculation that the scheme will result in a total of 4 million tonnes of extra CO₂ over the 60 year assessment period. We would want to see a significant reduction.

We have argued that a managed motorway with speed controls and lane management, keeping the hard shoulder as at present, could be implemented relatively quickly and at relatively low cost, bringing rapid relief to congestion on the M4, with improved safety, whilst retaining the benefits of the hard shoulder in case of emergencies and/or lane closures for maintenance.

For the last 6 weeks we have been working with Campaign for Better Transport (CBT) and FoE’s SE campaigner and other staff to encourage people to register as objectors to the scheme which goes to formal Examination in the autumn. Period to register is now over but for more details please see www.readingfoe.org.uk/m4.

CBT created a great leaflet, and FoE paid for 2,000 copies to be printed, and they have been distributed at the London Climate lobby on 17th June, by post to FoE groups, by hand in Reading, and finally by leafletting outside Reading Station. A presentation was made to Reading Green Party, to Reading Cycle Campaign, and to the Reading Transport Users Forum – which last was reported in getreading http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/local-news/smart-m4-increase-traffic-pollution-9492672?ptnr_rid=155926&icid=Untitled7 .

Next steps will be a preliminary meeting followed by an Examination of issues selected by the Inspectors – largely conducted in writing – in the autumn.

See also: Campaign for Better Transport <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/what-we-do> ; National Infrastructure Planning <http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk/projects/south-east/m4-junctions-3-to-12-smart-motorway/?ipcsection=overview>

Heathrow? Gatwick? Or neither?

The Davies commission has now reported in favour of another runway at Heathrow – but it wasn’t asked to devise a strategy for sustainable air travel, it was asked how to allow Britain to “maintain its position as Europe’s most important aviation hub”, so it has answered the wrong question.

Davies has written to the Climate Change Committee suggesting a carbon price of £330 per tonne of CO₂ in 2050 to keep emissions down to a proposed ‘cap’ – such a price would really be a game-changer if applied across the economy. <http://www.carbonbrief.org/blog/2015/07/raise-carbon-price-to-address-aviation-emissions/>

Campaign for Better Transport point out <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/better-transport/betteraviation> that 70% of flights are taken by just 15% of people. They and FoE support <http://afreeride.org/> which is campaigning for a ‘frequent flyer levy’. The failure to tax jet fuel and to apply VAT to ‘plane tickets amounts to a subsidy of over £11 billion a year.

Carbon Brief note that on a UK basis leisure flights far outnumber business flights - <http://www.carbonbrief.org/blog/2015/06/explainer-aviation-battle-to-limit-rising-emissions/>

Fracking

Campaign against fracking in the UK celebrated a great victory when Lancashire County Council rejected two applications from Cuadrilla at the beginning of July. FoE has an e-petition calling for government to respect this decision at <http://www.foe.co.uk/act/dont-let-government-overturn-lancashires-fracking-win> .

FoE has commented on a previously un-released Defra report on fracking risks <http://www.foe.co.uk/blog/defra-fracking-report-truths-government-tried-hide> .

TTIP

The TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) and its proposed provision for Investor-State Dispute Settlement saga rolls on. A vote in the European Parliament in June was postponed, and now has been rescheduled at very short notice for 8th July.

Campaigning MEPs had been planning to press for a stronger European Parliament attitude to TTIP and to ISDS in particular, but now the amendments that sought to strike out ISDS have been replaced by a new compromise amendment, brought by the President of the European Parliament, and several European party groupings.

There's a 38 degrees petition at <https://secure.38degrees.org.uk/page/speakout/meps-ttip> and comment at <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/blog/2015/jul/03/us-oil-export-ban-ttip-lifting-rise-carbon-emissions>

Waterfest and other public events

Our stall at Waterfest allowed us to meet old friends and many members of the wider public as the band played and the narrow boats processed. We talked about the M4 widening and got a fair number of signatures on our 'Run on Sun' campaign postcards asking MPs to help schools install solar panels and save energy and money.

Please support our efforts at the Caversham Festival and Earley Green Fair (see diary section).

Bee Cause – Bee Worlds

In the early spring Michael spotted a potential Bee World site in Earley by the side of Wokingham Road at Saffron Close – a large grassy verge in need of remediation after damage by construction vehicles. We recommended it to Earley Town Council who have sown a plot with flower seeds.

Now it's blooming and a Bee was photographed foraging on the poppies.



Reading Climate Action Network – Local Action Success Stories!

Reading Climate Change Partnership's 'RCAN' network held a meeting focussed on local action on energy in early June.

Dan Fernbank, the Energy Manager at the University of Reading, outlined the University's ambitious Carbon Management Plan (CMP) which will lead to a reduction of its carbon dioxide emissions by 35% in 2016.

Ben Burfoot, the Sustainability Manager at Reading Council, highlighted the scope and considerable achievements of RBC both in its own activity and with its partners: an RBC corporate reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of 31%, from 2008 to 2013/14 and, within the wider borough area, a 50% reduction is 'on track' by 2020 compared with 2005.

Jonathan Gregory described his 1873 semi-detached house which is presently the only SuperHome in Reading, and Richard Pike, a local resident, described improvements he has made to his Victorian home.

The meeting continued with presentations on Global Justice Now, and on the work of the RCCP, and concluded with a 'tour' of the Green Park wind turbine.

A fuller description with links to most of the presentations is available at <http://www.readingclimateaction.org.uk/news-events/news/2015/jun/energising-event-local-action-inspiration-attendees>

Useful Websites etc.:

Friends of the Earth 'England, Wales and Northern Ireland' <http://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>

Reading Sustainability Centre - <http://readingsustainabilitycentre.co.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 8th 2015 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 2015/16

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.