

# Reading Friends of the Earth Newsletter July - August 2020



For more information: <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading> or [www.readingfoe.org.uk](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk)  
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## **Diary in the days of covid-19:**

**General Meetings:** Reading FoE usually meets on the **second Wednesday of each month** in Room 1 upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 8:00 p.m. **but not for the foreseeable future**. Most meetings include discussion of general topics – some have a particular focus or guest speakers. Meetings are open to all.

**Wednesday August 12<sup>th</sup>:** Thinking about trying to resume 'second Wednesdays' – perhaps meeting in Westfield Park, Caversham - where drinks are available from The Fox and Hounds, Gosbrook Road. Perhaps 7:30? Let us know what you think – subject to confirmation later and warm dry weather!

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## **Other Activities with Reading FoE:**

**Wednesday July 8<sup>th</sup> – 19:30 to 21:00 – Zoom Meeting - Revision of Reading Transport Plan.**

Reading Liberal Democrats want to discuss RBC's Transport Plan proposals with us and have invited us to take part in an on-line discussion from 7:30 pm - all Reading FoE members are invited to **pre-register**:  
[https://www.readinglibdems.org.uk/transport\\_discussion\\_with\\_reading\\_friends\\_of\\_the\\_earth](https://www.readinglibdems.org.uk/transport_discussion_with_reading_friends_of_the_earth)

There will also be representatives of the Cycle Campaign involved. It will be a useful opportunity to debate with different people – in touch with political reality and different local issues.

Reading Borough Council's draft transport strategy is currently out for consultation at <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/dens/reading-transport-strategy-2036/> - consultation closes at the end of August so we have much more time to get a group response together – see notes below.

Cllrs. Page and Barnett-Ward responses on the Strategy revision at their recent Reading Transport Live Q&A event are now available online at: <https://www.reading.gov.uk/asktransportrdg> An informative insight into some of the details and complexities involved in addressing Reading's transport issues.

They mentioned issues around economic and population growth, repeated commitment to 'net zero by 2030' and talked up charging schemes. Among other things they mentioned 'mini-Holland' schemes in Waltham Forest ... which local cyclists there have mixed comments on <https://wfcycling.wordpress.com/mini-holland/> Also included comment that IDR was a mistake, and now it is there Cllr. Page would like it decked over.

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

**Repair Cafe** – usually third weekend of month - seems to be continuing but check on their website – <http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/projects/reading-repair-cafe/>

**Reading Bicycle Kitchen** – regular sessions at the Queens Arms – but currently outdoors – see <http://www.readingbicyclekitchen.org/>

**Green Drinks at RISC** – usually on the first Tuesday of every month – **but closed until further notice?** - see. <http://www.greendrinks.org/berkshire/reading>

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***Instead of face-to-face meetings there are many webinars, Zoom meetings etc.***

## **Ethical Reading:**

Three on-line events covering 'new normal', 'risk', and 'property' - <https://www.ethicalreading.org.uk/events/>

## **IEMA (Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment):**

Offers many webinars including on Waste, Circular Economy, Climate Change ....

For a full list and to book (free) go to <https://www.iema.net/events> and set filter to 'Non Member'.

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## **Coronavirus – ‘Build, Build, Build’ or #Build Back Better?**

The future is extremely uncertain but there is some hope that the disruption to ‘business as usual’ will lead to a change of direction for the better for the economy and the environment.

See FoE’s article on a ‘Socially Just Recovery’ <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change/what-we-need-coronavirus-recovery-plan> “Many of the solutions ... green space, warm homes, more cycling – are better for people as well as planet. What’s more, they’re not unrealistic. Government can, if it wants, adopt the above solutions without plunging the country into chaos.”

Alongside the collapse of airlines and the surge in bicycle purchases a recent Transport for the South East Forum meeting heard longer-term projections that in the worst case the impact of Covid could be a very major recession – 75% reduction in public transport demand and 30% reduction in jobs and 50% reduction in workplace capacity by March 2021 – or could be not too bad by 2021 if a ‘second wave’ is avoided, treatments are developed, and a vaccine becomes available. ( TfSE – a Councillor-led organisation - is at <https://transportforthesoutheast.org.uk/> )

Architects responded to the government’s ‘build, build build’ policy (relaxing planning requirements) that it was “expanding a policy that has delivered low-quality, unsustainable and over-crowded homes across England.” <https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/architects-greet-pms-plans-to-rip-up-planning-rules-with-extreme-concern/5106772.article>

Environmentalists argue that massive deep retrofit of UK buildings is needed to address climate change – at a rate of two homes per minute to achieve 27 million in 30 years. This would create a great deal of new employment if people can re-skill from jobs lost to the virus.

The ‘Retrofit Academy’ <https://www.retrofitacademy.org/> seems a good place to look for guidance on retro-fitting – advocating growth and up-skilling of the industry. PAS 2035 is a new standard to retro-fit towards zero carbon. Webinar on “London’s Retrofit Revolution: Driving a Green and Fair Recovery” covering finance and technology can be found at <https://event.on24.com/wcc/r/2424748/AE89DAA04AE9995C597FFB1FBACB0A?>

## **Heathrow – FoE campaign update!**

In May Heathrow Airport Limited and developers Arora Holdings were given permission to appeal in the Supreme Court against the decision to stop them building a climate-wrecking third runway. So FoE were appealing for funds: <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change/heathrow-third-runway-friends-earth-challenge-developers-supreme-court-appeal>

However Heathrow’s chief executive has now said a new runway would not be needed for years due to the coronavirus pandemic. Speaking to MPs on the Transport Select Committee, John Holland-Kaye said he was no longer thinking about the expansion plan. However, he said if the UK was able to reboot the economy and demand returned to pre-pandemic levels, a third runway might “be needed in 10 to 15 years’ time”

## **Road Investment Strategy – TAN campaign update!**

After FoE’s legal victory requiring Ministers to take account of carbon implications of airport expansion Transport Action Network want to challenge the government’s Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2), published on 11 March alongside the Budget. Ministers described it as England’s “largest ever” road-building programme. RIS2 involves spending £27.4 billion by 2025 on thousands of miles of roads from Cornwall to Northumberland - at a time of climate and ecological emergency.

Transport Action Network have raised nearly £50k towards a Judicial Review and say: “The Government was supposed to file its response to our legal challenge against its huge roads programme this week. Instead we’re still waiting. In its annual report to Parliament the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) called on ministers to “seize the opportunity” from COVID to tackle accelerating climate change. Surely scrapping road-building fits the bill?”

See ‘Case Updates’ in <https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/stop-largest-ever-roads-programme/>

## **HS2 update:**

Chris Packham and his team’s case for judicial review of HS2 was turned down in April but the Court of Appeal now will hear their appeal against this decision on 8<sup>th</sup> July. <https://www.bucksherald.co.uk/news/people/chris-packham-says-public-has-been-conned-hs2-court-appeal-grants-hearing-hs2-decision-proceed-2897954>

The embodied carbon and emissions in construction must be taken into account. The HS2 Phase 1 scheme is a net emitter for more than the first 60 years - construction around 6 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, operational savings around 3 million tonnes. See section 6 of

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/672382/E10\\_-\\_Carbon\\_v1.7.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/672382/E10_-_Carbon_v1.7.pdf)

Wildlife Trusts now make the wildlife case here <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/hs2-exorbitant-cost-nature>

XR activists marched along the route from Birmingham to London in June <https://rebellion.earth/2020/06/17/20-27-june-extinction-rebellion-and-local-communities-to-walk-125m-along-hs2-route-to-say-we-were-never-asked/>  
<https://ecohustler.com/nature/what-lies-along-the-line/>

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### **Reading Borough Council Consultations:**

*Please respond to the consultations yourself and share your opinions on these documents by e-mail and/or Facebook. We should aim to create a formal response on behalf of Reading FoE with lots of individual responses as well.*

The **Biodiversity Action Plan** and the **Reading Tree Strategy** public consultations are now open until July 10<sup>th</sup> so **we've only got a week!** Please get your responses in in time!

The **Biodiversity Action Plan** consultation page is: <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/css/treestrategy-biodiversityactionplan/> Direct link to draft BAP: [https://consult.reading.gov.uk/css/treestrategy-biodiversityactionplan/supporting\\_documents/Biodiversity%20Action%20Plan%20Consultation%20Draft%20May%202020.pdf](https://consult.reading.gov.uk/css/treestrategy-biodiversityactionplan/supporting_documents/Biodiversity%20Action%20Plan%20Consultation%20Draft%20May%202020.pdf)

This is a very useful update of a document that was seriously out of date. Here are some notes:

### **Green Spaces and Health:**

Another justification for enhanced biodiversity – more space should be given.

### **Pollinators:**

Good to see treatment in 'Verges' section. There seem to be no mentions of Bees in the main text – only in the lists.

### **Climate Change – carbon capture:**

Although the word 'mitigation' is used the word carbon is not mentioned in the document. While it's not specific to biodiversity, and may be more relevant to Tree Strategy and deserve detailed consideration there ... should at least mention roles of different ecosystems in capturing and/or retaining carbon.

### **Pesticides and Herbicides:**

These words do not appear in the document. They at least merit mention in introductory paragraphs, and it would be good to see actions on RBC to monitor and report types and quantities used by RBC, and consider phasing them out and/or review use and introduce rules to ensure they are responsibly used. It would be good to produce guidance for businesses and homeowners and gardeners.

### **Getting Action on Urgent Biodiversity issues:**

Remembering RBC initial poor response to request to protect Lizard Orchid when it appeared on a verge <https://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/17720366.reading-borough-council-acts-to-save-orchid-after-initial-refusal-slammed/> – that there could be some mention of what action public should take, and what action Council should take, in the event of anything similar ... who does the public contact at RBC to get urgent action on a biodiversity issue?

### **Monitoring in Reading:**

This section (Page 9) reads as if not much is known about species decline/increase in Reading. 'anecdotal evidence' and 'likely to have disappeared' don't fill reader with confidence that anyone knows what is going on – suggest at least create an Action to improve.

### **RBC Tree Strategy Consultation.**

Consultation page: <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/css/treestrategy-biodiversityactionplan/>

Direct link to draft Tree Strategy: [https://consult.reading.gov.uk/css/treestrategy-biodiversityactionplan/supporting\\_documents/Tree%20Strategy%20Consultation%20Draft%20May%202020.pdf](https://consult.reading.gov.uk/css/treestrategy-biodiversityactionplan/supporting_documents/Tree%20Strategy%20Consultation%20Draft%20May%202020.pdf)

[https://consult.reading.gov.uk/css/treestrategy-biodiversityactionplan/supporting\\_documents/Tree%20Strategy%20Consultation%20Draft%20May%202020.pdf](https://consult.reading.gov.uk/css/treestrategy-biodiversityactionplan/supporting_documents/Tree%20Strategy%20Consultation%20Draft%20May%202020.pdf)

One key issue is to define ownership and reporting of the Strategy and Actions. Suggest there should be an annual progress report on Actions to SEPT Committee and a 5-yearly review.

### **Valuation**

A 200-year oak can have value of around £200k – assessed by CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees) – should there be an effort made to value all Reading's trees in this way?

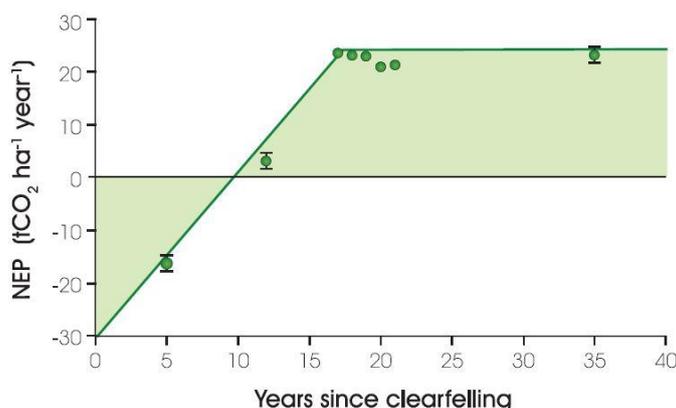
**Canopy Cover** 1.63 includes a commitment to assess the Borough's trees over the next 5 years – will be interesting to see results including carbon capture and pollution reduction. RBC Section 2, Objective 4 says "Canopy cover increase overall canopy cover to 25% by 2030; ensure that all wards have at least 12% canopy cover by 2030" In contrast FoE is calling for a doubling of cover across all local councils.

**Objective 3:** 3,000 'standard' trees by 2030 on Council Land. What does this mean? Is it good or not so good? What are 'standard' trees – not whips – will they survive and be cost-effective? Where will they be planted? How to assess 'whips'? Will 3,000 trees increase canopy cover to 25% over 10 years – trees take time to grow. Wokingham proposes 250k trees over 5 years – maybe many of them whips?

**Climate Change:**

It would be good to have inventory of estimated carbon stored in Borough's trees – to show success of policy. Good to see addressed for future action in 1.63. Strategy should contain estimate of net CO<sub>2</sub> up-take by trees over period of strategy so we can see how useful it is. In particular **by 2030** for existing trees and proposed new trees.

Figure 3.7  
 Net exchanges of CO<sub>2</sub> following site preparation and planting. Emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> from the soil dominate until c. year 11 (the break-even point) followed by increasing net removals of CO<sub>2</sub> from the troposphere by the growing young trees, reaching a plateau at canopy closure c. year 17.



Above diagram from the 'Read Report' (Read, D.J., Freer-Smith, P.H., Morison, J.I.L., Hanley, N., West, C.C. and Snowdon, P. (eds). 2009. Combating climate change – a role for UK forests - shows **there was initial large loss of carbon and it took about 17 years to reach maximum capture rate** and then capture rate stayed constant.

For another view of rates of carbon capture see Figure 3 – 23 in <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/documents/953/FCRP018.pdf>

**Reading Borough Council Transport Strategy 2036:**

Consultation will now run to 30<sup>th</sup> August so this repeats the note in our previous newsletter. <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/dens/reading-transport-strategy-2036/>

There are lots of ambitious words including

- “Demand management schemes, will be an essential element of this overall strategy.”
- “We have pledged to aim for a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. ... we call on the Government to accept moral and ethical responsibilities and to give Reading the additional powers and funding needed to help us achieve our goal.”
- “Due to key challenges including the declared climate emergency, car emissions causing poor air quality and the forecast levels of growth increasing future demand for travel, continuing with the status quo is not an option.”

But the projected outcomes – see Section 9.4 'Performance Indicators' - seem lacking or disappointing:

- car trips to, from and through the town centre will only be reduced by 20% in 15 years.
- cycling will increase by a mere 10% while the population of the borough is expected to grow by 8.7%
- carbon emissions from road transport down by 50% by 2036.
- no indicators for time lost to congestion or air quality.
- and there is a plan for a North Reading Orbital Route linking A4074 to A4155 (Woodcote and Henley Roads) as well as a third Thames Bridge when we expect new roads to encourage car use.

**Reading Council Launches experimental new 'Rewilding' approach to grass cutting:**

<http://news.reading.gov.uk/rewilding/?fbclid=IwAR0XsES3yQPWCxzbALCGzzPuYHwAK3zooaOPwkJJ5fauQGea98IdKII1964>

See list of sites at <https://www.reading.gov.uk/rewilding>

## Useful Links and General Information:

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/>.

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/>

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)

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

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**

**Our 2020 AGM scheduled for April 8<sup>th</sup> was postponed so Enrico Petrucco and John Booth will continue in the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively until a meeting can be convened.**

## **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 (currently 6 per year) and information about important events and actions.**

## **Reading FoE Subscriptions – Subscribe NOW for 2020/21**

**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:** \_\_\_\_\_

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