

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter July/Aug 2018

For more information: <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading> or www.readingfoe.org.uk
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friends of
the earth
Reading

Diary:

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 this July – see below.** Most meetings include discussion of general topics – some have a particular focus or guest speakers. Meetings are open to all.

Wednesday July 11th – Summer Excursion – Fobney Island and the Cunning Man – see end of Page 3 for more details. Cyclists meet at 7:15 in front of RISC (round trip 8 km?) – lifts in car by arrangement – if wet at RISC at 8:00. All welcome but please advise beforehand 07503626167 in case of changes of plan, and especially if you need a lift.

Wednesday August 8th - 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting** – topics by e-mail later.

Other Activities with Reading FoE:

Saturday August 4th – 10:00 to 15:00 - **Earley Green Fair** – west end of Maiden Erlegh Lake by Beech Lane - please offer to help on our stall – 'Places for Pollinators' petition, 'Clean Air Everywhere', Plastics, Climate Change, and doubtless other campaigns to talk about.

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

Wednesday 18th July – 18:00 to 19:00, Room G01 (Building L022), London Road campus - **The Urban Metabolism of Reading**, "how can resource flows, from energy to materials, be mapped in a small city?" - featuring the University of Reading's Dr Eugene Mohareb (Construction Management and Engineering) and Dr Daniela Perrotti (Architecture). <http://www.reading.ac.uk/architecture/upcoming-events.aspx>

Wednesday 18th July – 19:30 Wokingham CPRE AGM plus **'The Circular Economy is coming but why is it taking so long?'** - Prof. Keith Riley, former MD Veolia Environmental Services. St Michael's Church, Basingstoke Rd, Spencers Wood, Reading RG7 1AP. Guests welcome, wine and light refreshments.

Repair Cafe – third weekend of month (but not August) – <http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/event/repair-cafe-4/>

Reading Bicycle Kitchen – 'pop-up' events in various locations – see <http://www.readingbicyclekitchen.org/>

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>

East Reading 'Mass Rapid Transit'

Two different Planning Committees ... two different decisions.

Reading – a big crowd but we lost by many to 1.

Only Green Councillor Josh Williams voted to reject the application which had Labour and Conservative support.



Wokingham - a smaller crowd but we won by 5 to 4!

Three Conservatives, one Labour and one Liberal Democrat voted to reject the application.



Photos: Anne Booth and Brenda McGonigle

East Reading 'Mass Rapid Transit'

Reading's proposed 'Mass Rapid Transit' bridge for a bus-lane over the River Kennet had to get approval from both Reading and Wokingham Councils' Planning Committees.

On 30th May in Reading, despite good speeches by Green Councillors and a summary presentation of objections by John Booth (Reading FoE), John Walker (independent), and Tamzin Morphy and John Mullaney from SOAR, the proposal was given planning permission. Labour Councillors thought that late changes to the proposal including new ecological planting/shelving and new wooden moorings (that should probably be done anyway) adequately mitigated the environmental impact. <http://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/16260873.the-planning-committee-came-under-fire-after-claiming-the-mrt-would-help-the-environment/>

On 25th June in Wokingham, after good speeches by a Conservative and a Labour Councillor from the affected ward, and an illustrated presentation by Tamzin Morphy for SOAR, the Committee decided that Wokingham's policy commitments to landscape character should take precedence over the inclusion of the scheme in its transport plans. Councillors had visited the site a few days earlier and found it most picturesque and concluded they 'must do better than this' for the riverside environment. <https://www.inyourarea.co.uk/news/east-reading-mrt-future-uncertain-as-wokingham-rejects-plan/>. Wokingham's Lead Councillor for Transport quit his post a few days later.

Reading's Councillor Tony Page has said Reading will announce how it will respond very soon – options seem to be to appeal (which may take a long time), to submit a revised application, or to do something else.

To see details of the proposals and objections go to:

Wokingham: <http://planning.wokingham.gov.uk/FastWebPL/welcome.asp> use application number 172048.

Reading: http://planning.reading.gov.uk/fastweb_PL/welcome.asp use application number 171108.

See SOAR Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurAncientRiverside/>

After success at Wokingham SOAR is currently working on two tracks:

- Asking people to complain to Reading (under threat of appeal to Ombudsman) that it will be acting improperly by planning the MRT on open space which it does not already own. To convert open space to a roadway it must be 'appropriated' ... but the Council cannot objectively determine that the open space is no longer required if it has bought it specifically to build the MRT. Complaint letter to copy is at <https://tinyurl.com/Y76E7KAJ> - see also 6th June post to SOAR Facebook.
- Seeking to promote alternative measures to reduce traffic and improve bus journeys including a limited road pricing scheme and a rail station at Thames Valley Park.

Less Traffic – Better Towns:

On 13th June John asked Reading's Traffic Management Sub-Committee to publish results of a suitable traffic modelling sensitivity analysis to show the implications for congestion of an increase in peak hour traffic, and how beneficial a reduction in peak hour traffic would be ... in the hope that this would inform cost-benefit estimates of road pricing schemes.

Councillor Page replied

- "Whilst the specific data being requested in this question is not readily available at the current time (and could only be provided at disproportionate cost), transport modelling will be undertaken to inform development of the updated Local Transport Plan strategy, including forecast levels of congestion in the area taking account of the planned levels of growth."
- "The strategy will include proposals to manage key challenges including levels of congestion and air quality."

More detail is expected at the Policy Committee on 16th July.

At Reading's Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee on 2nd July Enrico asked for details of studies to support an earlier claim that road user charging could not solve congestion issues in East Reading and why there hasn't been a review of possibility of differential charging with concessions for local residents.

Councillor Page responded:

- The feasibility was investigated in 2009. This work concluded it should not be progressed as a standalone scheme, rather a package of measures to enhance the provision of viable alternatives should be in place and the impact evaluated prior to any charging scheme being introduced.
- "road user charging is not a straightforward process as demonstrated by the experience of other areas including Manchester. For a charging scheme to gain approval from the Secretary of State the consequences must be fully considered, therefore suggestions of implementing a charging scheme on a single stretch of road in the Borough are unlikely to be feasible due to the impact of displacement and re-routing of traffic onto alternative routes."

Interesting to note that Labour Councillor Jason Brock (Southcote ward) has written "Nottingham has implemented a workplace parking levy that encourages the use of public transport (by prompting businesses to manage their staff car park capacity). The proceeds are then used to subsidise and extend the public transport offer itself. All this is exactly the kind of bold and creative thinking that Labour councils should be aiming for."

<https://leftfootforward.org/2018/05/heres-what-labour-councils-can-do-in-the-face-of-government-cuts/>

Anyone live in Southcote or know Cllr. Brock?

Air Quality:

John took part in a Radio Berkshire's Andrew Peach show on Clean Air Day (June 21st) and we released a Press Release with a photo of Queen Victoria('s statue) being 'not amused' by Reading's dirty air but it was not taken up.

Highlights from Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee - 2nd July

Food Waste collection: Item 9 was consideration of re3 strategy for 2018-2020

http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/9002/Item09/pdf/Item09_1.pdf which has two principal aims. They are:

- Reduce the net cost of waste
- Recycle 50% by 2020

The emerging Waste Action Plan for Reading will focus on reducing cost and will include:

- Introduction of weekly kerbside food waste collection.
- Steps to improve diversion of recyclable material from the residual bin to recycling.
- Reductions in the contamination of recyclable material with nonrecyclable wastes, by way of a dedicated team of Waste Officers.
- Improved and sustained communications campaigns, including schools.
- Improved direct contact with residents, businesses and landlords.
- Further promotion of the Council's trade waste offer
- Hard market testing of the waste service.

EV Charging: Item 12 was a report <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/9005/Item12/pdf/Item12.pdf> advising the Committee of the outcome of a successful bid to the Department of Environment, Farming & Rural Affairs for £100k and the details of a project to encourage the uptake of Electric Vehicles and pilot new electric charging infrastructure in areas of the Borough with no off-street parking.

Waterfest and East Reading Festival

We had stalls at both these events (on 16th and 17th June) – weather was OK and attendance was good – partly because people came to Waterfest after Reading Abbey opening. Thanks to everyone who helped.

- 75 people signed our 'Pollinator Action Plan' cards. See e-petition <https://act.friendsoftheearth.uk/act/ask-your-council-put-pollinators-first>
- 68 signed letters to RBC about appropriation of land for MRT (see above)
- 38 signed Oxford FoE's petition on the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway www.expresswayactiongroup.com .

M4 Smart Motorway – back again by popular request:

Despite our efforts (see our 2016 web-pages at <http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/m4>) and government 'austerity' the M4 'upgrade' to a smart motorway between Junction 12 (Theale) and junction 3 (Hayes) is being progressed. An exhibition will be held in Reading on the 19th July 2018 - Oracle Shopping Centre 09:00 to 20:00 – also at Sindlesham on 11th and Theale on 13th.

"The design and construction teams will be available to discuss the scheme and answer questions" ... but probably not the questions we'd like answered!

Website says due to complete 2021/22 and cost £586.4 to 862.4 million – is nothing certain?

<https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/m4-junctions-3-12-smart-motorway/>

Climate Change:

The Committee on Climate Change has published its 10th annual Progress Report <https://bit.ly/2KggPqz>

Overall, UK emissions are down 43% compared to the 1990 baseline while the economy has grown significantly over the same period. However most of this is down to excellent progress in reducing emissions from electricity generation, while reductions in other sectors have stalled.

The committee's four key messages to Government:

1. Support the simple, low-cost options
2. Commit to effective regulation and strict enforcement
3. End the chopping and changing of policy
4. Act now to keep long-term options open

Renewable Energy:

Jeremy Leggett's review of the last 17 years in 93 slides "**History and future of UK solar PV market in pictures and charts**" <https://jeremyleggett.net/2018/07/04/opportunity-despite-history-and-future-of-the-uk-solar-pv-market-in-pictures-and-charts/>

Excursion 11th July:

Fobney Island has had a lot of work recently to enhance its wildlife value. Anne does a butterfly survey there, and a chance to view Reading's old waterworks (!). See <http://berksoc.org.uk/conservation/fobney-island/> and

<https://www.facebook.com/friendsoffobneyisland/> . **The Cunning Man** is a large pub with canal-side garden.

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 11th 2018 Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were re-elected to the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively. A draft Privacy Policy was approved.

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 2018/19

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.