

Reading Friends of the Earth



Newsletter July - August 2023

For more info: www.readingfoe.org.uk ... or Twitter @ReadingFOE ... or Facebook [Reading Friends of the Earth | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ReadingFriendsOfTheEarth) ... or email info@readingfoe.org.uk ... or 'phone 07503626167.

General Meetings: Reading FoE usually meet on the **second Wednesday of each month** in Room 1 upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 7:30 p.m. Access to RISC from London Street is via passage to the right of the shop-front. Most meetings will be 'hybrid' using Zoom. Please request a Zoom link if you have not received one. Most meetings discuss plans and general topics - some have a particular focus or guest speakers. Meetings are open to all. Meetings may cancel at short notice due to Covid or availability of group officers - if in doubt check our website www.readingfoe.org.uk on the day or phone or e-mail for confirmation (contacts above). **BUT see below for our July meeting – we are trying something new!**

Wednesday July 12th: 7:30 pm. **Meet in 'Biscuit Factory'** (at junction of Oxford Road and Queen's Walk) - where we will try to link up on Zoom to people who cannot attend in person. Expect to be more of a social plus informal discussion of a range of environmental issues rather than a 'business' meeting with an agenda - but will discuss our future events.

Wednesday August 9th: 7:30 pm. General meeting at RISC. **Some possibility may change this location so please check website if you have not received confirmation from us by then.**

Waterfest – 10th June



We had a stall inside (and display boards prominently outside) a marquee which was provided by Reading Climate Action Network. Another fifteen people signed our 'Reading for Warm Homes' petition on paper.

Other groups there included Reading Hydro, Reading Community Energy, Econet, and Global Justice Now.

One end of the marquee was a presentation space with projector and PA and seating.

John twice gave a short presentation about 'Reading for Warm Homes'. Audience numbers were small but there were helpful comments about fuel poverty in Reading.

Thanks to Chris for doing a stint on the stall, to Anne for transporting the gear, and to Paolo and Michael for attending the presentations.

July-August Activities with Reading, National or South East FoE:

15th July – 14:00 to 16:30 – Stall at 'Open Afternoon' **St James Eco Church**, Kingfisher Drive, Woodley, RG5 3LH. Hoping to get some signatures on Reading for Warm Homes' petition in Matt Rodda's constituency. Graham will be running this – if you would like to help e-mail info@readingfoe.org.uk – or just turn up (#13 or #14 bus useful).

29th July – 11:00 to 17:00 - **FoE South East Summer Gathering – in Brighton**. A day of skills building workshops, discussion, and creative activities, on campaigns both local and global. Details and booking at https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/south-east-summer-action-gathering-tickets-638605114087?dm_i=78W4.GGC2.17YHF1.224N7.1

5th August – let us know if you can help on our **Earley Green Fair** stall (near Maiden Erlegh Lake) – 10:00 to 15:00? Usually a good, well-attended event. Earley is not in Reading East constituency so we will be covering general issues rather than the 'Reading for Warm Homes' petition.

“Reading for Warm Homes” - petition to Reading MPs – sign now!

Including ‘on-paper’ signatures we now have 55 so need many more over the coming months! National FoE say they will send to their list of local supporters – which should be helpful - but they can’t do it for a while.

Our petition is live on the ‘Action Network’ so now we need more signatures to present to the MPs (with wider publicity!) in the autumn – national target date is 18th November. Please help us publicise this initiative to other local people and concerned groups. We will be happy to supply leaflets, petition forms, draft articles for newsletters ...

Sign petition here: <https://tinyurl.com/5n7tu5tt> Please sign if you are in either Reading constituency (Alok Sharma in Reading West or Matt Rodda in Reading East) – we can sort by postcode later.

Petition calls for:

- Urgent support for people dealing with sky-high energy bills.
- A new emergency programme to insulate our heat-leaking homes
- An energy system powered by cheap, green renewables.

Reading Borough Council - Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee – June 29th:

For all papers and link to video recording of the SEPT meeting see
<https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=5136>

Councillor Page has become Mayor so key Councillors for environmental issues now are:

- John Ennis - Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport
- Mickey Leng - Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
- Karen Rowland - Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety
- Will Cross – Chair Cleaner Air & Safer Transport Forum – Chair Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport

Reading Transport Strategy 2040. Lead Councillor John Ennis confirmed Labour’s support for a new Thames road bridge and opposition to ‘congestion charging’ for Reading residents. Cllr. Brock had previously written “there is no proposal to charge Reading residents or Reading businesses for entering a cordon” while not ruling out other forms of ‘demand management’ <https://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/around/23587254.prospect-congestion-charge-reading-shut/>

Green Cllr. McElroy was very critical of the strategy and said its ambitions were too cautious.

Reading FoE should consider it in detail and respond to the consultation when it opens.

<https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s27712/Appendix%20A%20-%20Reading%20Transport%20Strategy%202040%20-%20Draft%20for%20Consultation.pdf>

Other topics addressed at SEPT included:

- a draft Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy for Reading,
- an update on the progress made towards the delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes in Reading,
- declaring the whole of the Borough a smoke control area to address air quality impacts
- progress with implementation of the Council’s Low Carbon Energy Capital Investment Programme.

Reading Borough Council – Clean Air and Safer Transport Forum – July 4th

This meeting was attended by four Reading Councillors and five members of the public including Graham and John. We heard from specialist council staff on Air Quality and the emerging Transport Strategy. The anticipated presentation on Network Management was not given because the relevant staff member was not available.

Air Quality –

Diffusion tube measurements of NO₂ in key locations still around national target of 40 ug/m³ which is way above WHO figure of 10 ug/m³. Council turning attention to PM_{2.5} but can only measure it at one location in the East Reading Cemetery. Did not seem to know where funding for more monitoring was going to come from.

John said that it would be good to have estimates of health implications of current levels of pollution – to understand how concerned to be.

Graham asked if impact of proposed incinerator at Burghfield would make much difference to air quality and if there was progress on planning conditions proposed to be applied to it – we did not receive a clear answer.

Air Quality Action Plan is to be updated – with new UK targets (which still fall short of WHO) - will go to SEPT in November.

£327k grant is to be spent commissioning a programme of education to raise awareness of Air Quality in local schools. Perhaps in hope that children will encourage parents to change behaviour.

Smoke Control Areas are to be enlarged to encompass the whole Borough. People could be fined up to £300 if found to be burning un-approved fuels.

Strategic Transport Update

see papers on SEPT link <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=5136>

John said that while strategy was to run to 2040 it was important to have shorter-term targets.

Reading Climate Festival:

Reading Climate Action network ran this with a very diverse programme <https://readingcan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/230526-Reading-climate-festival-programme.pdf> including a presentation by John about 'Reading for Warm Homes' for Reading FoE. Some recordings are on-line, but not ours, yet.

'Decarbonising Reading'

This Climate Festival event was set up by Reading Borough Council staff and featured a number of contributors from other organisations. It included a presentation on a plan to extract heat from the Thames and create a heat network with an Energy Centre between the Thames and the railway to power expected redevelopment using heat pumps.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZY1tnXUZKw>

Cycle Schemes Suggestion Map:

Reading Cycle Campaign have launched a 'Cycle Suggestion Map' on their website – it shows schemes they have identified over the years and would welcome more suggestions for improvement.

<https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/new-cycle-suggestion-map-goes-live-on-our-website/> and

<https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/campaign-information/>

National Climate Policies:

CCC: The Climate Change Committee's **Annual Report to Parliament** says "confidence in the UK meeting its medium-term targets has decreased in the past year." <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/2023-progress-report-to-parliament/>

Friends of the Earth commented: "Today's progress report is a damning assessment of the government's new carbon reduction strategy ... there are now only credible plans for less than a quarter of the emissions cuts needed to meet the UK's legally binding climate targets"

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/climate-change-committee-annual-report-parliament>

ETS: More recently Government has announced tightening limits set by the **Emissions Trading Scheme**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tighter-limit-on-industrial-power-and-aviation-emissions-as-uk-leads-the-way-to-net-zero> ...

- "The Authority recognises that a comprehensive suite of policies including funding, regulation and carbon pricing is needed to deliver the decarbonisation we need this decade and beyond." It's good to see acknowledgement of urgency to achieve change 'this decade' rather than the 'Net Zero by 2050' mantra ...
- It's also good that "domestic maritime transport, waste incineration and energy from waste sector will be added to the scheme." ... but with what allowances?
- But optimism is sapped by the statement "To ease this transition, the cap will be set at the highest level of the range consulted on, in line with net zero - allowing maximum flexibility for industries. Extra allowances will also be made available to the market between 2024 and 2027 ... "

Five Missions: Last week the **Labour Party** announced that, if elected, it would deliver a national warm homes plan, giving local authorities and devolved governments the power and resources to upgrade 19 million homes with energy-efficiency measures, via a street-by-street insulation programme. <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Mission-Climate.pdf>

This is largely good news ... have to hope other parties will follow suit ... but FoE has reservations about the speed of phasing out oil and gas extraction. <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/labours-climate-rhetoric-strong-clarity-needed>

Transport Action Network:

Transport Action Network have started a national campaign to get the government to revise its road investment strategy (RIS3) for 2025 - 2030. <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/no-to-bigger-roads-and-more-congestion>

Heat Pumps:

Featured in BBC Countryfile on 2nd July <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001nj82> - retro-fitting a village and Kensa heat pumps at about 12 minutes 30 seconds in.

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

26th July – 19:30 at RISC - Global Justice Now discussion on **Practical steps to living within planetary boundaries** thinking about ways we could ‘degrow’ our economy. <https://www.facebook.com/events/239641068839733/>

Kidical Mass Reading - ‘Making space for the next generation, one bike ride at a time!’ - are holding a number of rides for children in the coming months - see www.kidicalmassreading.co.uk or on Twitter @KidicalMassRead

Reading Critical Mass cycle ride ... leaving at 19:30 from the Civic Offices in Bridge street. Leisurely ride for about an hour and a half finishing at pub. Rides on the last Friday of month.

XR Reading hold meetings and events – see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/XRRdg/>

Reading Cycle Campaign – has regular monthly meetings and other activities. <https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/>

Repair Cafe – usually third weekend of month - <http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/projects/reading-repair-cafe/>

Reading Bicycle Kitchen – regular sessions – see <https://www.readingbicyclekitchen.org/>

Green Drinks – usually on the first Tuesday of every month in the Castle Tap – see [Reading Green Drinks | Facebook](#)

Reading FoE later events – dates for your diary – please let us know if you can help - details later:

September 10th (Sunday) - Cycle Festival – stall at event in Christchurch Meadows - <https://readingcyclefestival.co.uk/>

September 23rd (Saturday) – Earth Fayre – stall at event in All Saints Church, Wokingham, 10am - 4pm

Useful Links and General Information:

Recent links for Reading FoE stalls and campaigns: www.readingfoe.org.uk/links

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/>. Also [Greater Reading Environment Network | Facebook](#)

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 FoE Officers etc.

Our 2023 AGM on April 13th elected Enrico Petrucco to continue in the post of Co-ordinator and Paolo Turati to take over from John Booth as Treasurer.

Reading FoE e-mail communications

If you would like to become a supporter on our mailing list and receive and join in our day-to-day communications please send an email to info@readingfoe.org.uk to request our GDPR Consent form. We have separate lists for people who only want to receive our newsletter (currently 6 per year) and information about important events and actions, and for people who want to be more involved and communicate directly with other active supporters.

Reading FoE Subscriptions:

A subscription/donation would be welcome from supporters but is not required. We’re much happier to have an extra pair of hands doing the important stuff. To join or renew, just fill in the slip below and send it off with or without 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 address newsletter costs, meeting room hire and campaign expenses. Further contributions would be greatly appreciated. To contribute please pay cash at a meeting or event or request our bank account details.

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 request our bank account details.