

Reading Friends of the Earth



Newsletter July – August 2024

For more info: www.readingfoe.co.uk * ...
or Facebook [Reading Friends of the Earth | Facebook](#) ...
or email info@readingfoe.co.uk ... or 'phone 07503626167.
* Note: Our new website is still under development. Our original website- still updated - is <http://www.readingfoe.org.uk> .

General Meetings: Reading FoE usually meet on the **second Wednesday of each month** either in person or on Zoom. Often in Room 1 upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 7:30 p.m. Access to RISC from London Street is via a passage to the right of the shop-front. Most meetings will be 'hybrid' - 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.

Wednesday July 10th: 7:30 pm. **Reflecting on the national election campaigns and results!** See below for FoE scoring of national manifestos. Probably also consider involvement in the **Reading Climate Strategy Revision process** – details below. Will also discuss future activities – campaigns to support etc. Will meet in person at RISC and on Zoom.

Wednesday August 14th: Probably 7:30 pm. Expect to be in person. Perhaps start with an outdoor walk to look at wildlife and/or proposed development sites (subject to weather) then retiring to a pub or café. Will decide details in July. Check websites and Facebook if not updated by e-mail.

Fifty years on...!??

Legend has it that Reading FoE first met in 1974. Entering our second half-century we can celebrate a long history of local activities. Our January newsletter featured a campaign for cycling from 1975. March featured 'Save the Whale' from 1979. May featured loft insulation from c. 1979.

Now

Holy Brook Nook – June 12th 2024

Beth Scott and Steve led us on a walk past interesting features in the town to this 'Food4families' site – with planters - near the Holy Brook. And then to a pub where Swifts screamed above us. (*Thanks to Anne for photo.*)



Then

National FoE 10th anniversary - 1981

We celebrated (and got press coverage!) by eating a special cake - representing an idyllic landscape - which Lesley had created.



Future Events and Opportunities with Reading and national FoE:

July 18th – 18:00. National FoE webinar – **'What Comes Next'** – campaigning after the general election.
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/what-comes-next-campaigning-after-the-general-election-registration-932295891107>

August 3rd – 10:00 to 15:00 - **Earley Green Fair** – we have a stall booked at this annual out-door event off Beech Lane, Earley. Please volunteer to help and talk to the public.

Date for the Diary: **Reading Cycle Festival** – 8th September – should decide soon if we should have a stall at this.

Recent Activities with Reading FoE:

Air Quality: On 8th May our monthly meeting at RISC and on Zoom was attended by Olivia Bailey - Labour candidate for Reading West and Mid Berkshire - and by invited guest speaker Ross Jarvis – Reading Borough Council’s Principal Air Quality Project Officer.

Ross spoke about the **Clean Air Living Matters** project. This aims at engaging children in schools about Air Quality issues. It is funded by £327k from DEFRA and was designed and is being delivered by local company Design Nature with involvement of Reading University, Stantec, and RBC. It runs to March 2025.

To involve children it has 10 static and 20 mobile air quality sensors, measuring various pollutants including PM10 and PM 2.5, with which they can create an air quality map of their area. Also measured are CO2 and Volatile Organic compounds.

Children learn to **Reduce** sources of air pollution or **Move** away to less polluted spaces. Primary school children get a document to take home to involve parents.

CALM hopes to reach 9 secondary schools and 24 primary schools – delivering assemblies, talks and activities – including for geography or science lessons. So far involving 2 secondary and 6 primary schools. They are keen to contact more schools to engage with and Ross asked us for any help we can give.

Webpage is interesting with links to case studies and lesson plans. <https://www.reading.gov.uk/climate-and-pollution/clean-air-living-matters-exploring-reading-with-schools/> and <https://designnature.world/exploring-why-clean-air-living-matters-with-reading-schools/>

Warmer homes and heat pumps: Stalls at **Waterfest** (8th June) and **East Reading Festival** (23rd June) saw us talking to members of the public and a number of Councillors, and two candidates for Parliament, about climate change, heat pumps, and other topics.

At Waterfest Dr. Rayner Mayer of ‘Sciotech Projects, Yateley’, former Chair of the European Heat Pump Association, gave a presentation on the Forbury bandstand on warmer homes, insulation, and heat pumps. Unfortunately it was not well publicised but the few people who attended found it very interesting.

Thanks to Rayner Mayer for presentation and to Chris, Vicky, Mark, Tricia, Anne and John for help with stalls.

Reading Climate Festival: On 11th June we took part in a Reading Climate Festival webinar “**Campaigns to Change Systems**” with Global Justice Reading, Berkshire Greenpeace and XR Reading. Each group outlined key recent campaigns. Event was recorded but is not yet on-line.

General Election July 2024

While Friends of the Earth are not party-politically aligned they have joined forces with friends at Greenpeace to rank political parties’ manifestos ahead of polling day on July 4. Follow the link below and find out which parties are fighting for people and planet <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/system-change/general-election-2024-manifestos-final-scores>

Reading Climate Action Network – help develop new strategy:

RCAN is a partnership working to help Reading become a net-zero, climate-resilient town – with support from the Council and business and voluntary organisations. <https://readingcan.org.uk/about-us/>

They have designated 2024 as ‘Reading’s Year of Climate Engagement’. They want people and groups to get involved to help shape Reading’s Climate Emergency Strategy 2025 – 2030. This will be the fourth Climate Strategy – and will set targets for the Council and others. <https://readingcan.org.uk/priorities/> .

Their proposed calendar of involvement is at https://readingcan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/HowToGetInvolvedYOCEP_2805_Final.pdf

By the end of August they would like groups to hold a guided discussion on the topic and submit responses. <https://readingcan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Discussion-Pack-Designing-a-Net-Zero-Reading-2805.pdf>

After this there are two more periods of involvement as the strategy is developed.

“Reading for Warm Homes” – our petition to Reading MPs

In view of the imminent election we closed this petition in early June, and – as by then we suddenly had no MPs – e-mailed all the candidates (for whom we had addresses) in our three constituencies. Total unique signatures: 198

- In Reading Central: 106
- In Earley and Woodley: 45
- In Reading West and Mid Berkshire: 22

One Green Party candidate responded to support our request for support.

We also put out a Press Release which we’re not aware was taken up by any media.

Clean Air and Safer Transport Forum:

On 2nd July John Sharpe and John Booth attended this RBC 'group representatives by invitation-only' event to hear RBC officers Ross Jarvis (Principal Air Quality Project Officer) and James Turner (Transport Planner). The meeting was well-attended by RBC Labour Councillors including John Ennis (Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport), several representatives of cycling action groups and CADRA, and Cllr. James Moore (leader of the Liberal Democrats).

Ross Jarvis presented 2023 data for **air quality**. NO₂ average of 56 sites was 33 ug/m³, one site exceeded legal limit of 40 ug/m³ but would have been legal at nearest residential receptor. PM_{2.5} legal at the only measurement location (urban background) but a new Defra site had been commissioned on Rose Kiln Lane and RBC expected Ministry of Public Health to commission more near schools. He agreed that while electric vehicles would solve tailpipe emissions particulates from tyres might well increase for heavier vehicles and the effects of different particulates on health were uncertain.

Two new school streets to open before summer holidays. Council struggling to get 'before' Air Quality data for Civtas site. Still want more schools to join CALM programme.

Reading's **Electric Vehicle Strategy** was discussed. Funding of £866k had been agreed from the LEVI fund <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/grants-and-loans/local-electric-vehicle-infrastructure-scheme/>. Aim is to install 2,700 on-street chargers and 120 fast chargers in car parks. Approval of Action Plan awaited. Will put out to private enterprise suppliers – hope to agree 15 year contracts by end March 2025. Hope to agree some limitations on pricing. John Sharpe suggests agreeing a % above domestic tariff rates and that shorter supply contracts should be sought.

Some existing charge points were well-used, some not so well. Major concerns over electricity supply from SSEN – John Ennis said if urban bus fleet was totally electrified (25 new vehicles expected very soon to start this) would alone require 8% of Reading's electricity (supply or consumption? – was not clear).

John Ennis commented that the Council wants to reduce traffic congestion of all forms irrespective of power source.

Transport Strategy update to 2040 had been approved unanimously at SEPT.

Active Travel: Cycle lanes and various other improvements were in progress. New school at Rivermead means Cow Lane underpass crossings are to be upgraded to provide cycling and pedestrian priority.

John Booth questioned expected 2040 indicator of 54 kT CO₂ from transport, and lack of an indicated outcome for costs of congestion in Reading. It appeared the CO₂ indicator was essentially a target to do better than government requirement and not based on detailed analysis or simulation. Cllr. Ennis agreed these questions were important and invited us to get back to him.

AOB: John Sharpe asked if something could be done about deliberately loud engines being used on cars and motorbikes. Council agreed it was an issue.

RBC Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee:

Latest committee meeting was on June 27th. Lots of interesting topics. Largely positive policies. Agenda and link to webcast at <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=5400>

Item 7: **Local Development Scheme** – draft of Local Plan delayed 4 months until November 2024.

Item 8: **Low Carbon Capital Investment Programme**. Borough up-grading its buildings, often with heat pumps. 90% of £7.1 million 5-year programme spent or committed to live projects. £2.17m corporate solar programme has yet to be mobilised.

Item 9: **Reading Transport Strategy 2040. Consultation report** said:

"There were a significant number of positive responses with regards to **congestion charging** as a method to fund the schemes and initiatives in the strategy. A reasonable number of responses included suggestions that any implemented congestion charging scheme should target through-traffic as opposed to Reading residents."

"Opinions on a **Third Thames Crossing** were predominantly positive, and respondents considered it to be an important infrastructure project in reducing congestion in Reading and reducing cross-river journey times. Some comments also note that any new cross-river project should be provided exclusively for more sustainable travel modes such as cycling and public transport and should not encourage an increase in private vehicle use and induced traffic in the surrounding areas. A minority of comments were concerned about the environmental impacts of a new crossing."

Item 9: **Reading Transport Strategy 2040. Final approved version:**

No results for simulation of alternative scenarios

Performance Indicators: delete next page break

- No estimate for costs of congestion
- Transport carbon emissions still “54 kT CO2 per year (less if possible)” in 2040.
- No indicator for transport emissions affecting air quality.

Item 11: **Bus Service Improvement Plan.** Updated version approved for submission to government.

Reports on past and proposes new measures. Green party objection to London Road bus lane discussed.

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

New! People Planet Pint: an informal social meet up, primarily aimed at people involved in sustainability. Reading will now have its own PPP on the second Thursday of the month, starting on 11th July in the evening. Milk Bar 8 Merchants Place Reading RG1 1DT. 18:00 to 21:00. Register for chance of free pint!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/510395548980140/search/?q=Pint>

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. ... Rides on the last Friday of the month. Leave at 19:30 from the Civic Offices in Bridge Street. Leisurely ride for about an hour and a half finishing at pub. Not sure if still happening. Check before you go! <https://criticalmassreading.wordpress.com/> doesn't seem to be updated ???

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](#)

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’ <https://friendsoftheearth.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>

Newbury Friends of the Earth – Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/755866711218545/>

Reading FoE Officers etc.

Our 2024 AGM on April 10th elected Enrico Petrucco to continue in the post of Co-ordinator and Paolo Turati to continue in the post of 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. 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.