

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter Mar/Apr 2010

For more information see <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading>
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**Friends of
the Earth**

Diary:

General Meetings: Reading FoE usually meets on the second Wednesday of each month, upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 8:00 p.m.

March 10th: – 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **Green Development in South Reading** – presentation of reports by Reading University students who have been investigating options for two sites with excellent access to the M4 – see text below – plus general update. Meeting deferred from January because of snow – but now the reports are complete and consultation has started on the Borough's Sites and Detailed Policies Document.

April 14th: - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – general meeting, probably discussing an initiative to publicise opportunities for waste recycling – including AGM with election of officers for 2010/2011.

Other FoE Activities:

Saturday March 20th – Berkshire FoE AGM – RISC from 13:00 – a chance to meet members of other local FoE groups and find out what they are doing and how we can help each other. Contact us for details.

Other Activities and Meetings:

Monday 8th March: The Transport Implications of Heathrow Expansion - The Case AGAINST and FOR Expansion – Reading Town Hall 18:15 for 18:45 – Note this is a meeting of Chartered Institute of Transport and Logistics and while 'all are welcome' pre-registration is important – and speakers and scope perhaps subject to change – check on http://www.ciltuk.org.uk/pages/iesearchres?_group=Thames%20Valley

Wednesday March 10th: – 6:30 p.m. at Civic Offices – **Council's Green City Forum** – these meetings alternate between 'sustainability' focus and 'parks and wildlife' focus – this time it's the former.

Thursday March 11th: – **Greater Reading Environmental Network Hustings – West Reading** – Parliamentary candidates questioned on sustainability - Tilehurst Methodist Church 19:30 - <http://www.gren.org.uk/>.

Tuesday March 16th: University Lecture – **Functional Foods** – Palmer Building – 20:00 - The lecture will look at the current developments in functional foods such as prebiotics, probiotics, dairy peptides and phytochemicals - good science or marketing hype?

Thursday March 18th: Institute of Engineering and Technology - **The Great Space Debate** – Should We Leave Planet Earth (if climate change proves too difficult)? University Great Hall – London Road – 18:00 for 19:00 – speakers to include Derek Wall of Green Party. <http://nearyou.imeche.org.uk/events/event.htm?eID=3823> – free, but pre-registration recommended.

Sunday March 27th: Earth Hour – a call from WWF to switch off your lights from 8:30 p.m.

Tuesday April 13th: - **GREN Hustings East Reading** – provisional - confirm on website - <http://www.gren.org.uk/>.

Rushy Mead Turbines:

The University of Reading owns land south of the M4 between junctions 10 and 11 and is working with Partnerships for Renewables (PfR) to explore the feasibility of siting wind turbines on the land around Rushy Mead – for which it would receive a share of the revenues. <http://www.pfr.co.uk/rushymead/> PfR is a Carbon Trust enterprise, part-funded by HSBC.

The Developer's View: At a meeting of the Earley Environmental Group on 16th February PfR's Tom Brincombe explained the Government's ambitions for on-shore and off-shore wind energy. He said the problems of delivering blades to sites limited the size of turbine achievable on-shore. He outlined the efforts they went to to check that the wind resource would be adequate and that wildlife, radar, microwave links, TV reception and local residents would not be adversely affected. He said turbine towers would be at least 500 m from the nearest residential property.

Current proposals were for 5 turbines of between 2MW and 3MW each, with 80m tower and 50m blades so similar to the one at Green Park, but proposals had not been finalised and any planning application was some months away. Photo-montages would be prepared so that people could assess visual impact. The decision would be with the local authority (Wokingham) because only applications for more than 50 MW would go to the new Infrastructure Planning Commission.

Local Opposition: The proposals are opposed by Householders against Rushy Mead (HARM) who held a meeting attended by around 100 people on 17th February at the British Legion in Arborfield. HARM was represented by a Mr. Heard who lives very close to a proposed turbine site.

He said he was in favour of renewable energy but not at expense of health and well-being. He was concerned about visual impacts, property prices, noise, and the effect on horses being ridden on bridleways. He showed a map with 1.5 km (or 2km?) circle based on site that included a lot of Lower Earley housing.

Noise: The main speaker was a Dr. Christopher Hanning, MD, FRCA, LRCP - an Honorary Consultant in Sleep Disorders Medicine to the University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust – he was involved in Leicestershire in AWFALS “Against Windfarm at Low Spinney” and almost certainly contributed this article to their website <http://awfals.org.uk/Background/By-Bye-Sleep.aspx>

He said that low frequency noise carries. Change in volume as blades pass the tower causes ‘Amplitude Modulation’ (AM) which is disturbing. In Lincolnshire could be heard 900 m. from a turbine. Noise from multiple turbines adds. If you hear it it irritates you – can be loud enough to induce ‘Arousal’ – technical term for sleep disturbance that does not result in remembered awakening – remembered awakenings are just the tip of the iceberg. 25% of people found noise disturbing at 1 km from an array of 6-off 1.5 MW turbines

ETSU-R-97 (the UK Standard for assessing noise from turbines) was “worse than guesswork” – was 13 years old – designed for small turbines – he showed a graph where amplitude modulation was at higher repetition rate and lower peak level for older turbines than for modern machines. ETSU allows 5dB above background noise and works on averages not AM peaks. Dr. Hanning wanted at least 1.5 km between turbines and residential property.

Claimed a 2006 DTI study of low frequency noise had conceded that noise disturbs sleep, said draft reports had been edited by DTI to make more favourable to turbines – removing a penalty for AM

Health Effects: Dr. Hanning quoted a study of Mars Hill in Maine – turbines built on a ridge. 22 adults typically 800 m downwind compared with 28 typically 6 km upwind. Downwind had experienced worse health effects since turbines built on ridge.

Information from FoE: Nick Rau recommended a Sustainable Development Commission report: http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/file_download.php?target=/publications/downloads/Wind_Energy-NovRev2005.pdf Also a report of recent comments <http://www.ioa.org.uk/about-us/news-article.asp?id=160> by the President-elect of the Institute of Acoustics, and further comments by the same person at a January meeting <http://www.planningresource.co.uk/news/ByDiscipline/environment/980376/Road-noise-more-disruptive-turbines/>

Speaking at a Wind Turbine Noise meeting in Cardiff Trevor Cox said: “Noise from roads is more disruptive to people's lives than that from wind turbines.” “It might surprise people to know that the number of complaints about wind farm noise is actually rather small - maybe evidence that ETSU-R-97 isn't working too badly at the moment. We mustn't forget the potential political ramifications if a decision is made to revise the ETSU guidelines. Undermining the noise regulations is a useful tactic for campaigners who are trying to stop planning permission being granted.”

Green Development in South Reading?

The national FoE organisation gave us a grant to enable us to sponsor supervision of work on regeneration by students of planning at Reading University. Their supervisors will present their results at our March meeting and we can discuss how to use them to respond to the Borough's ‘Sites and Detailed Policies’ consultation.

Two separate teams have looked at the “Courage Brewery” site (operations closing in 2010) and the old “Digital Pyramids” site between the old A33 and the A33 Relief Road (already empty). Both are interesting because of proximity to the M4 – what ‘green’ options are there for a site with excellent motorway access? Certainly there is demand for more housing in Reading, and almost anything would be better than more offices.

One suggestion was that development of the two sites should be linked – facilities complementing development on each other.

Proposals for the Brewery site included:

- 700 to 800 houses – with the affordable homes to be of the same standard as the rest
- A retail section with a medium-sized supermarket
- Lots of green space
- A themed pub, to retain links with Reading's brewing tradition.

The students discovered that there were boreholes to clean water supplies suggesting possible continuing use in food or drink manufacture.

Proposals for the 'Pyramids' site on Imperial Way included:

- Co-operatively-owned 3-4 floor housing
- Good pedestrian linkage of 'island site' to the existing housing to the east, involving road closure.
- Wood-chip-fired combined-heat-and-power
- SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage System) to cope with potential flooding problem, including a pond
- A football pitch

Oxfordshire to Compost Green and Food Waste

According to 'Letsrecycle.com' a new 'in vessel composting facility' has been opened in Oxfordshire by Agrivert to treat the food waste that the local authorities collect. "The facility is expected to produce up to 20,000 tonnes of compost a year, to be used by farmers in the local area in order to keep the miles the compost has to travel to a minimum and reduce the carbon footprint of the facility."

http://www.letsrecycle.com/do/ecco.py/view_item?listid=37&listcatid=217&listitemid=54668§ion=composting

Agrivert is also going to build two new anaerobic digestion facilities to cope with up to 60,000 tonnes of food waste a year. The two AD facilities are set to generate enough electricity to power 5,000 homes and there are also plans to use the heat created during the process to dry waste woodchip and generate biomass fuel.

"Green IT"

Tripta Prashar of "GivingTime and Solutions" <http://www.givingtimeandsolutions.com/> gave an interesting talk at our February meeting about the drive to lower the environmental impact of IT.

She said ICT was responsible for 4% of emissions globally – this could be addressed by optimising business processes and ensuring machines are switched off or to the lowest level of standby when not in use. Her company also advised on purchasing of equipment and licenses, and on disposal of equipment.

The Carbon Reduction Commitment legislation which comes in from April 2010 would force larger companies to take action.

Carbon Reduction Commitment:

According to the Department of Energy and Climate Change:

- The scheme is designed to tackle CO2 emissions not already covered by Climate Change Agreements and the EU Emissions Trading Scheme. It will affect around 20,000 organisations
- Organisations qualify if their total half-hourly electricity consumption exceeded 6,000 megawatt-hours (MWh) during 2008. Expect to include supermarkets, water companies, banks, local authorities and all central Government Departments. Qualifying organisations will have to comply legally.

Companies would be ranked in a league table based on their energy-saving performance, and would either be financially rewarded or penalised depending on their league position. There would be reputational damage for poorly-performing companies. The 'user guide' to the scheme is at:

http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/what_we_do/lc_uk/crc/user_guidance/user_guidance.aspx

Latest News on Pincents Hill

West Berkshire Council has turned down a planning application from the developer, Blue Living, and it is not known if they will appeal.

Green Business Website

Reading has a new Green Business website www.rgbn.org.uk. Reading Borough Council, with support from Kyocera Mita UK and Designation, is developing a web-based community for individuals active on climate change, sustainability and other green projects within businesses and public sector organisations in the greater Reading area. Apparently individuals can register as well as companies – so far about 26 people have signed up.

Useful Websites:

www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk
www.foe.co.uk

GREN - Greater Reading Environmental Network <http://www.gren.org.uk> – site under development, more content should be added over the next few months. See also <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ReadingEnvNetwork/>

Doorstep collection of WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) service in Reading being offered by Midex Reverse Technologies <http://www.midex-rt.com/>

True Food Co-op: www.truefood.coop now with new shop in Emmer Green!

Reading Borough Council Waste and Recycling:
<http://www.reading.gov.uk/environmentandplanning/wasteandrecycling/>

South East Forum for Sustainability: <http://www.sefs.org.uk>

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)

And some more on Food, Agriculture, Supermarkets and GM issues:

Local Food Directory, with links: http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk/Local_Economy.htm

RISC <http://www.risc.org.uk/readingfairtrade/>

Reading FoE e-mail communications

If you would like to be on our main mailing list and join in our day-to-day communications please email 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 2010/11

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 £7.00 / £4.00 (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.