

# Reading Friends of the Earth



**Friends of  
the Earth**

## **Newsletter Mar/Apr 2011**

For more information see <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading>  
email [info@readingfoe.org.uk](mailto:info@readingfoe.org.uk) or 'phone 0118 9868260.

### **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 9th:** – 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – topics likely to include planning for waste action on March 19<sup>th</sup> and discussion of latest planning documents from Reading Borough Council.

**April 13th:** - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting including brief AGM** – topics later by e-mail.

### **Other FoE Activities:**

**Saturday March 19<sup>th</sup>** – FoE national day of action on Waste – likely to be a 'photo-opportunity' – see below.

### **Other Activities and Meetings (not run by Reading FoE):**

**March 14th (Monday)** – **Café Scientifique – What will we do when the oil runs out?** – Professor Chris Rhodes ( Chemistry) – Déjà vu Bar – 61 St Mary's Butts - 7:30 p.m.

**March 15th (Tuesday)** – **Ways to Save the World: a scientific dragons den** – Café Mondial, Reading University Students Union - 7:30 p.m.

**March 30th ( Wednesday)** – **"Great Energy Debate"** – **How can we keep the lights on for the next 20 years?** Event hosted by various Engineering Institutions but open to non-members - Pre-registration essential - see <http://www.theiet.org/local/uk/thames/berks/debate11.cfm> - Palmer Building, Reading University - 7:00 p.m.

**April 11th (Monday)** – **Café Scientifique – Fusion: powering the future?** – Dr. Chris Warwick, Culham Centre for Fusion Energy – Déjà vu Bar – 61 St Mary's Butts - 7:30 p.m.

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### **Reading FoE Priorities**

Our February meeting discussed our priorities for the next few months and agreed to campaign on the Energy Bill [http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/energy\\_bill\\_overview.pdf](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/energy_bill_overview.pdf) , to continue to target Reading Borough Council to 'Get Serious about CO2', and to participate in the waste action on 19<sup>th</sup> March. Also to join the network on the Decentralisation and Localism Bill ([http://www.foe.co.uk/community/campaigns/rights/localism\\_bill\\_26404.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/community/campaigns/rights/localism_bill_26404.html)) which has implications for local planning.

### **Waste Campaign**

FoE nationally are pushing for a goal to halve household 'black bag' waste by 2020. This is equivalent to recycling 70% of our waste at current rates of waste generation, but we can meet this goal through more waste prevention and reuse as well as increasing recycling. They are asking for a similar ambition for business waste.

The benefits of setting this goal will include:

- Reduction of climate change emissions
- Reduction of our use of scarce resources
- Creation of tens of thousands of jobs
- Cheaper in the long term - councils have to spend less on expensive incineration or landfill
- Fewer residual waste treatment plants required.

Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March is to be a 'Day of Action' when groups around the country are asked to create a photo opportunity to gain attention from the media and the public.

## **Carbon Budgets**

In early December Chris arranged a meeting with Councillors Andrew Cumpsty and Kirsten Bayes, the leaders of Reading's ruling coalition, at which national FoE campaigner Quentin Given asked for Reading's support for the national FoE initiative to include enabling legislation for local carbon budgets in the Energy Security and Green Economy Bill <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/energyhl.html>

In January Councillor Cumpsty replied that he had discussed the proposal with the Conservative group and: "There was real interest in the idea, but several questions were raised about cost/effectiveness/outcomes of the initiative." Quentin sent him a detailed response, part of which we summarise below:

### **How can local carbon reduction be funded?**

Local authority action on climate change is vital to help achieve the depth and extent of emissions cuts needed to comply with the UK's moral and ethical climate responsibilities, to which the coalition Government has underlined its commitment.

Many of the initiatives that a council can take to cut carbon can:

- save money
- generate income
- help to deliver on a range of local priorities.

To unlock this potential a framework of local carbon budgets is needed to galvanise all councils, not just those already leading the way, into action. As part of this framework, the Government must make sure that all local authorities can fund action on climate change – in particular through supporting the staffing of climate change teams and ensuring local authorities can access the capital and ongoing revenue support they need to deliver low-carbon transformative programmes.

Local action offers the opportunity for a much more efficient allocation of funds than national action alone: street-by-street insulation programmes; overhauls of local public transport networks; efficient large-scale investment in appropriately-sited renewable energy; coordinated action by local business and other stakeholders; locally relevant public information campaigns: these are just examples of the types of steps that local authorities will be able to lead with much more precision and efficiency than national programmes alone could hope to deliver.

For more detailed information please see FoE's report "[Cutting Carbon Locally and How to Pay for It](#)", the [Carbon Descent Report](#), and the FoE [web-pages](#) on local action on climate change.

## **Reading's Transport Policies**

On January 19<sup>th</sup> John joined a delegation from GREN to discuss the Borough's Transport Policies with Councillor Willis, the lead Councillor for Planning and Transport.

The Borough is acting on cycling – adding white lines in Peppard Road and other places and with aspirations for a cycle and pedestrian bridge across the Thames from the Station. It has no intention of selling off Reading Buses - £1 to town scheme has been launched on some routes – but bus passes would now only be useable from 09:30 in line with national scheme. It is proposed to combine Transport Users Forum with Traffic Management Panel.

Planning permission had been granted for warehousing on 'Worton Grange' site – said to be expected to create 500 jobs – local employment needs were important.

This meeting is documented in more detail for GREN at <http://www.gren.org.uk/transportmeeting190111.cfm>

## **GreenSpeed – The Case for 55 mph Speed Limits**

Our February meeting consisted of a presentation by Daniel Scharf of GreenSpeed on the case for road speed limits of 55mph on motorways and trunk roads - he also favoured 20 mph speed limits in urban areas.

He said that the three causes of congestion were said to be volume, mix, and speed of traffic. The last was not often discussed at conferences but a very impressive list of experts had concluded that 55 or 60 mph would give substantial improvements to congestion (i.e. capacity) and fuel consumption (30% reduction in motorway emissions at 50 mph). Air quality would be improved.

There were a number of win-win knock-on effects. Public transport would be encouraged because car trips would not be much faster – especially if buses were allowed to travel at 60 mph – which would help to reduce congestion. Lower speeds would both reduce accidents and reduce severity of accidents – so vehicles could be made lighter which in turn would reduce energy consumption and therefore fuel consumption.

If oil rose to \$120 per barrel then tar sands would become economic so much greater supplies of (much dirtier) fossil fuel would become available.

He urged us to ask our MPs to support **Early Day Motion 853** which calls for measures to achieve Zero Carbon Britain by 2030 and “at least two hours of prime time television per week should be used to explain the gravity of the crisis to the public, that domestic flights should be phased out, a speed limit of 55 miles per hour introduced and unabated coal usage reduced” – see <http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=41832>

### **Meeting with Councillor Warren Swaine**

Reading FoE held a special meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> January with Councillor Warren Swaine, who at that time was Lead Councillor for the Environment. He has since resigned this post and it has been taken over by fellow Liberal Democrat Councillor Kirsten Bayes who is also Deputy leader of the Council.

On environmental issues Councillor Swaine thought it important to incentivise change rather than employ a guilt culture or penalties. This was easier if environmental actions added financial benefits – landfill tax at £80 per tonne was a good incentive to reduce waste to landfill. He wanted to clamp down on toxic wastes (such as batteries) to landfill and give priority to recycling heavy materials (such as glass) to reduce landfill tax.

Problem with recycling compact fluorescent bulbs was that they were few and weighed little, so he proposed to work with the voluntary sector to establish routes to recycling and safe disposal.

Collection of waste was by Reading’s Streetcare department. But disposal contract was with Waste Recovery Group (WRG) via the Reading/Wokingham/Bracknell consortium RE3. Reading had to deliver a defined tonnage of waste to WRG every year. The Private Finance Initiative meant contract was for 25 years – but he hoped to renegotiate some of it in co-operation with the other local authorities in RE3 and was optimistic about starting anaerobic digestion. To some extent was limited by hardware already installed at Smallmead and by the fleet of collection vehicles owned by the Council – could not afford to make some rapid changes.

Review of waste management was on-going. General waste collections would become weekly in some areas but would remain fortnightly in many others.

Reading was to go for 100% reduction in emissions of mercury from the crematorium when 50% was required by legislation. Could sell unused quota but would not do so because that would force other Councils to cut emissions.

He said there were air quality problems in Reading, particularly at Cemetery Junction, caused by idling traffic, but could not say how they would be resolved.

### **News on Waste from RE3 – Enrico’s Report from January Stakeholders Panel:**

There was a presentation from WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) on the Courtauld Commitment - a voluntary agreement to reduce grocery retail environmental impact – see [www.wrap.org.uk/courtauld](http://www.wrap.org.uk/courtauld):

- Focus on reducing waste and increasing recycled content in packaging.
- Reductions from 2009 to 2012: 10% less packaging, 5% less supply chain waste
- Applies to items produced and used in UK only

Strategies include directing a change in consumer behaviour (“Love Food Hate Waste”) and requiring annual reporting.

Case studies included Asda, Heinz, Co-op, Waitrose, Tesco, and Marks and Spencers. The direct actions of these different retailers ranged from directly reducing glass, steel, and plastic waste to trialling composting and anaerobic digestion.

After the presentation the discussion opened to cover all issues. RE3 expressed a strong interest to invite further community groups to join the stakeholders board. Reading FoE members are welcome to contact Enrico Petrucco if interested to join the stakeholders board, especially if involved with other community groups. An invitation to GREN will be sent for representatives of member organisations and GREN itself.

The minutes say that RE3 had investigated stakeholders' request for a visit to the Colnbrook Energy from Waste site: "Re3 has not been able to secure a visit. Follow up contact with the facility managers has indicated concern over inviting pressure group members to the facility." Surely not – only three of five 'Stakeholders' present at the meeting admitted any connection with FoE, and only one of the other two said he was with Greenpeace.

A point was raised about <http://www.wasteconnect.co.uk/> as a starting point for recycling information for interested people.

RE3 representatives from WRG mentioned that they are currently in discussions with charities about collection of bulky items for reuse to divert from landfill. Reading FoE suggested that a positive incentive could be set up to encourage the reduction of contamination in recycling. (ie: each council could give tickets to allow a free bulky item collection to some random residents that have recycled without contamination).

RE3 representatives from WRG mentioned that establishing Anaerobic Digestion within the RE3 consortium would first require discussion in the Joint Waste Disposal Board and mentioned a strong interest to operate a program if a contract was put out to tender but could not explain why it is not happening under the current contract (blame was put on the councils).

### **Feed In Tariffs (or Clean Energy Cashback):**

We intend to organise an event - jointly with Reading Energy Pioneers – funded by a grant to GREN from Reading Borough Council - to publicise this opportunity to Reading householders. Ideas and offers of help needed!

### **Transport Users' Forum**

At the Transport Users Forum on 2<sup>nd</sup> February John was given answers to his written questions:

- the Shinfield Road 'improvements' - that seem to have caused reduced traffic flows leading to considerable local opposition and hence an on-going review of options by TRL - had not been subjected to detailed simulation at the design stage. Officers said this was not normal on small schemes. John suggested that during the investigation Councillor Willis might wish to establish whether simulation would have been beneficial. John commented that there was not one 'right' way to redesign a junction – politicians had to specify what priority was to be given to different users and different routes – queues of vehicles seemed to be shorter on Whitley Wood Road and there were now advanced stop lines for cyclists.
- the projected 15% increase in demand for travel over the next 15 years (seen as a challenge in the Local Transport Plan) is derived from the Reading Transport Model, which utilises growth factors based on housing and employment development data locally and background growth factors from national sources. Reading and surrounding areas will grow in both jobs and population, therefore generating new trips by additional population or to new employers or other destinations.

Some other delegates seemed very down on cycles and cycle parking but Councillor Willis defended them. The council was looking into provision of charging points for electric vehicles.

Tony Pettit (consultant) gave a presentation on potential cycle hire schemes – he proposed roadside docking stations and first half hour free to encourage short journeys. By the Olympics London was supposed to have 8,000 bikes and 14,400 docking stations. Paris had 20,000. Reading might start with 1,000. It was important to have a lot to make it viable. Most users tended to be young men. Reading would have to seek funding from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund.

### **Sustainable Fisheries:**

Bracknell FoE recommend viewing the recent documentary "Hugh's Fish Fight" – a campaign to reduce waste of fish which has over 650,000 current supporters. See <http://www.fishfight.net/>

### **Sustainable Community Strategy:**

Check out Reading's progress at [www.reading2020.org.uk](http://www.reading2020.org.uk) – in a recent poll renewable energy came fourth out of eight priorities, behind 'Breaking the Cycle of Poverty', 'Capable Communities' and 'Skills for All'.

### **Rushy Mead Turbines:**

Consideration of the application by the Wokingham Planning Committee has been put back awaiting the developer's response to comments by RSPB and English Heritage – probably until May 2011 - see [http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Rushy\\_Mead.doc](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Rushy_Mead.doc).

## Useful Websites etc.:

[www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk](http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk)  
[www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)

**GREN** - Greater Reading Environmental Network <http://www.gren.org.uk/>.

**Transition Reading** - Reading's Transition Town movement <http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/>

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](http://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.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)

Local Food Directory, with links: [http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk/Local\\_Economy.htm](http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk/Local_Economy.htm)

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

## Reading FoE Officers

At our AGM on April 14<sup>th</sup> 2010 Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were elected to the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively.

## 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](mailto: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 2011/10

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.