



**Friends of the Earth**

# Reading Friends of the Earth

## Newsletter Mar/Apr 2012

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. Most meetings include discussion of general topics – some have particular focus or guest speakers.

**March 14th:** – 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – no specific topic – see e-mails.

**April 11th:** - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – including short AGM to receive annual and financial reports and elect officers. Topics likely to include an introduction to new national campaign 'Clean British Energy' to demonstrate the massive public (and business) support for moving away from imported coal and gas and on to clean British energy from wind, waves, tides and sunshine.

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

**Thursday March 15th – RBC Traffic Management Advisory Panel** – Reading Civic Offices 18:30 – Transport Users Forum business usually for first hour – check for agenda on Council website.

**Wednesday March 21st – GREN Member Meeting** – GREN board meeting - open to all. Minutes of February meeting at <http://www.gren.org.uk/resources/GRENmemberminutes010212.doc> 7:00 p.m. at RISC.

**Wednesday April 25th – "Peak Oil"** - the situation and implications. The global production of conventional oil is near a peak, and the same may apply to the global production of 'all-liquids'. Dr. Roger Bentley has been studying peak oil since 1994 and has published a number of papers on the topic. He was the first Co-ordinator of the Oil Depletion Analysis Centre (ODAC), and a past Secretary of ASPO <http://www.peakoil.net/>.  
Earley Environmental Group. Function Room, Maiden Place, Earley, 19:30.  
<http://www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk/> - check for final details.

**Saturday June 16<sup>th</sup> - Waterfest** – early warning of date for a Council-organised summer event we usually support.

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### Reading Means Business on Climate Change.

This Reading Climate Change Partnership event on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> January was attended by over 100 people from business, Council and voluntary bodies. <http://www.reading.ac.uk/about/newsandevents/releases/PR427809.aspx>

The intention was to allow community groups and others to have their say in the development of a new Climate Change Strategy for Reading to replace the current strategy which is a Council creation and can be found at <http://www.reading2020.org.uk/climate-change/>.

There were presentations from Dennis Moynihan of the Institute for Sustainability about "making the magic happen" – i.e. motivating people to act - <http://www.instituteforsustainability.co.uk/>, and from Peter Harper of the Centre for Alternative Technology <http://www.cat.org.uk/> who said that a non-nuclear low-carbon future was possible but would require some lifestyle changes. There was a review of progress against the current strategy by Ben Burfoot the Borough's Sustainability Manager and Sally Coble the Chair of the Climate Change Partnership.

These were followed by workshops on themes of 'People', 'Place' and 'Prosperity'.

Reports from the meeting including presentations are at <http://www.rgnb.org.uk/Januaryevent> and priorities from the workshops at <http://www.rgnb.org.uk/system/files/RCCP%20event%20-%20top%203%20actions.pdf>

The workshop outputs show that people can identify lots of good points for action – the difficulty will be finding the enthusiasm and money to make them happen – but people left the meeting with positive feelings and new contacts.

## **“Final Demand” – National Energy Campaign – and FiT Fiasco:**

FoE's national energy campaign calls for the government to

- Hold an urgent public inquiry into the power and influence of the 'Big Six' energy companies
- Not to axe support for clean British energy produced by communities, councils, business and householders.

Nationally over 40,000 people have signed the petition which is to be handed in on 26<sup>th</sup> March. Enrico had great success at a Peak Oil benefit night at the Afroba in January - he gave a short but impassioned speech linking Peak Oil to our campaign and was then surrounded by people keen to sign our petition and give him money - so much so that the collecting box he brought back contained over £50!

At the end of October the government had spread chaos through the Solar PV industry by proposing - with only six weeks notice - a drastic cut to the feed-in tariff and a condition that homes should achieve good standards of insulation before being eligible for the FiT. The campaign became more urgent and more focussed on PV.

After collaborating on our local press release on the FiT fiasco (as reported in last newsletter) local businesswoman Erica Robb of Spirit Solar went on to complain to the Prime Minister at a televised meeting in Maidenhead, featured on South Today, and (with some guidance from the national FoE energy team) gave an excellent interview on the 'Today' radio programme. [http://www.spiritsolar.co.uk/files/Spirit\\_Feb\\_2012\\_Newsletter\\_Iss\\_2.pdf](http://www.spiritsolar.co.uk/files/Spirit_Feb_2012_Newsletter_Iss_2.pdf)

John went with a GREN delegation to discuss the FiT issue with Rob Wilson MP. Mr. Wilson acknowledged that the consultation process had been unsatisfactory, nevertheless said that another 'boom & bust' period had to be avoided and the industry placed on a sustainable footing. He was keen to ensure that lower income households did benefit from the FiT for PV installations, not just better off households. He said he would support some sort of differential treatment for schemes where the community benefit was locked in.

Latest news is that despite twice being defeated in the Courts (by FoE with two Solar companies) on the legality of proposing to change the FiT rate before the end of the consultation period the government has continued to spread uncertainty by launching an appeal to the Supreme Court on the timing of the change of rate.

However while still insisting on a reduction of FiT rate for panels installed after 3<sup>rd</sup> March, and consulting on future six-monthly tariff reductions, the government has relented a little from its October 2011 proposals. It has relaxed its requirement for buildings to achieve an energy performance certificate rating of 'C' before they could receive the FiT to a rating of 'D' – which is much less onerous and costly to achieve. And it will only reduce the 'multi-installation' rate paid for organisations with more than 25 installations instead of those with more than one - to help community groups, small businesses and councils.

[http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/meeting\\_energy/Renewable\\_ener/feedin\\_tariff/feedin\\_tariff.aspx](http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/meeting_energy/Renewable_ener/feedin_tariff/feedin_tariff.aspx)

Overall it's a terrible tale of government mis-management which will have damaged public confidence in renewable energy schemes – government should have acted much earlier to reduce the FiT rates to achieve steady and sustainable growth of the solar PV industry as costs fell instead of slamming on the brakes at the end of October.

For your last chance to sign the Final Demand petition before 26<sup>th</sup> March see:

[http://www.foe.co.uk/what\\_we\\_do/final\\_demand\\_info\\_32893.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/what_we_do/final_demand_info_32893.html)

## **FoE 'Greater South East' Regional Gathering**

This event in London in early February included discussion of new campaigns and inspiring presentations from a number of community actions, as well as the opportunity to meet staff members and fellow-campaigners.

- The Final Demand campaign would switch in April to focus on Clean British Energy to influence the Electricity Market Reform Bill. This will determine funding structure for electricity supply so will be extremely important.
- A campaign on Greener Products is to launch in the autumn. Companies are starting to report the carbon footprint of their products but not on how much other 'stuff' – vital natural resources - goes into them. There is expected to be an opportunity to influence European legislation on this in 2012/13. iema guide to this is at [http://www.iema.net/download/readingroom/IEMA%20Briefing\\_SCP\\_Survey\\_Feb12.pdf](http://www.iema.net/download/readingroom/IEMA%20Briefing_SCP_Survey_Feb12.pdf)
- Bees will be the focus of a campaign to start in April – with guidance from a Reading University expert – to promote understanding of the importance of Bees and the threats to them from farming practices, loss of habitat and disease.

Positive presentations from other groups who had made a success of local community actions were from:

- Organiclea – a workers co-op in Waltham Forest who run apprenticeships for nursery workers and have recently become an 'Independent and Provident Society' to fund solar panels on their site <http://www.organiclea.org.uk/>

- Food-on-our-Doorstep – a guide to locally-produced food in the High Wycombe area – essentially a local food directory – grew out of Wycombe TT – funding from local authority Sustainable Development budget - <http://www.food-on-our-doorstep.org.uk/>
- Transition Heathrow – grew from people from the 2007 Climate Camp at Sipson and ‘Plane Stupid’ – long term aim is to build a thriving, resilient and sustainable communities within the Heathrow Villages - 6 people moved to the area in 2009 and ‘adopted a resident’ - squatted a derelict market garden and are reclaiming it – unless they get evicted .... <http://www.transitionheathrow.com/>
- Wey Valley Solar – a Solar Schols Co-operative - spun out of a FoE group but owned by the schools – raised £620k – installed 50 kW PV panels on each of 5 secondary schools – a ‘Run for the Sun’ for publicity involved 1,500 children – co-operative model investors get 5% return after first year - <http://www.weyvalleysolar.co.uk/>

A session on future energy campaigning, led by Quentin Given, pointed out that the ‘Big 6’ electricity suppliers were all different – using different energy sources - but the funding rules all led to more gas burn – there were planning applications for 27 GW of gas-fired capacity when the government model suggested on 11 GW more capacity was sensible. We would have to counter arguments that renewables were responsible for higher costs by saying that while renewables were high in capital cost once they were built costs were known and stable.

### **Proposals for Worton Grange:**

No new planning application yet but it seems that the owners of the ‘Worton Grange’ site – having gained planning permission for warehousing – are quite keen to use the site for mixed uses – housing, offices and retailing – which would seem much better than the tall office towers proposed a few years ago, and better than warehousing given that warehousing on the Brewery site seems likely to go ahead.

At the recent exhibition of proposals housing took up a large part of the north-eastern part of the site – which seems very sensible. However flats in the south-west corner over the A33 seemed a less attractive proposition – a bad situation for dwellings and surely there could be something more welcoming at this gateway to Reading?

The retail section at the south-west end was also large with proposals for underground car parking. It’s questionable whether the developers wish to cater solely for improved food shopping for local people when presumably there will be demand from passing trade on the A33. There didn’t seem to be much office space other than a block for ‘community use’.

The bus interchange seemed to be a roadway running between the retail and housing parts of the site, and introducing a new roundabout on Imperial Way. No scope for expanding it to cater for greater use or

See [www.wortongrange.org](http://www.wortongrange.org) and <http://www.anjoro.plus.com/downloads/southreading.doc>

### **Proposals for Station Hill:**

The exhibition and on-line information at <http://www.stationhill-reading.co.uk/> suggest very intensive office development and little scope for public transport improvements which the developers said would be catered for within the Station redevelopment. The visualisations suggest deep canyons between tall buildings.

Approximately 300 dwellings would line Friars Walk leading to Friar Street but there would be little provision for culture, artistic or sporting uses which it would be good to have in this accessible location if Reading is to contribute fully to life in the Thames Valley.

The new blocks will not be as tall as in the previous proposals however there were suggestions that redevelopment of the adjacent Thames Tower site <http://www.thamestower.com/> could be very tall.

### **Local Enterprise Partnership:**

The Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership [www.thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk](http://www.thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk) has been granted £10.8 million from the government’s Growing Places fund – likely to be used for capital infrastructure investments such as housing schemes, transport, and other infrastructure projects.

TVBLEP is a sponsor of a free event – “Collaborating for Growth – Business Show 2012” – at the Berkshire Conference Centre, Reading, from 08:00 to 18:00 on Wednesday April 18<sup>th</sup>. Register at [www.bmgevents.co.uk](http://www.bmgevents.co.uk)

### **Have You Signed Up?**

Free at the point of use and extremely useful for national and local news respectively:

- FoE Campaign Hubs are at <http://forum.foe.co.uk/campaignhubs/>
- GREN – Greater Reading Environmental Network – is at [www.gren.org.uk](http://www.gren.org.uk)

## 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) - Winner Best Retail Initiative BBC Food & Farming Awards 2011 - shop in Emmer Green and local markets!

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

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 13<sup>th</sup> 2011 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 2011/12

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.