

Reading Friends of the Earth Newsletter Mar/Apr 2013



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

Diary:

General Meetings: Reading FoE usually meets on the second Wednesday of each month upstairs in Room 1 at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 8:00 p.m. Most meetings include discussion of general topics – some have a particular focus or guest speakers.

March 13th: – 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – likely to cover future plans for the Bee Cause and Clean British Energy campaigns

April 10th: - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – topics later by e-mail to the list – will include a short AGM to discuss annual reports, to elect officers for 2013/14, and to conduct any other business.

Other Reading FoE Activities and Meetings:

Saturday June 15th – 'Waterfest' – advance notice of this annual event where we plan to have a stall.

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

Monday 18th March – How do water companies plan for the future - Café scientifique - Monroe's Rock Cafe (formerly Déjà vu Bar and Eatery): 61 St. Mary's Butts, Reading, RG1 2LG - 7.30pm.
<http://www.reading.ac.uk/news-and-events/about-cafescientifique.aspx>

Tuesday 19th March – Homes for the Future – Thames Valley Engineering Institutions' annual special event. This year aims to provide an overview of how houses and their associated services may change over the next 30 years. Pressure to reduce carbon emissions and the demand for services is likely to continue both through legislation and the impact of rising costs, but the advances in technology that this is driving may also bring improvements. Palmer Building University of Reading – 19:00 to 21:00. Pre-registration essential at
<http://www.theiet.org/events/2013/170701.cfm>

Tuesday 19th March – Sunday 24th March – Field to Fork exhibition – “a thought-provoking, interactive exhibition produced by the Global Food Security Programme”. At MERL – Redlands Road
<http://www.reading.ac.uk/merl/visitus/merl-admission.aspx> - for opening hours see -
<http://www.reading.ac.uk/merl/whatson/merl-specialevents.aspx> (note children's activities on 23rd only).

Wednesday 27th March – GREN Members Meeting – a few short presentations by members on local and global actions and issues – plus an open forum - RISC Room 1 19:30 - <http://www.gren.org.uk/Events.cfm>

Green Drinks at RISC - is on the first Tuesday of every month. Come along to the Global Café from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m. to meet like-minded people for a chat over a drink or two. <http://www.greendrinks.org/berkshire/reading>

Sudden Colony Collective and The BeeCause

The bee costumes came out again for another great evening of entertainment at RISC on 24th January. Many thanks to all performers and helpers – particularly to Chris, Adela and Annalisa for their work on the night, and especially to Enrico who made it happen and acted as MC.

As well as raising very useful sums of money for RISC and Reading FoE we collected 48 BeeCause cards to the Prime Minister.

Also in January both Reading MPs attended a FoE parliamentary briefing on the issues and Rob Wilson MP issued a supportive press release and was pictured in both local papers accompanied by a giant bee. We have written to both MPs asking them to sign a statement of support.



Photo: Annalisa Cavallini

Veronica Leeke is continuing to liaise with the Museum of English Rural Life about their wildflower planting which is due to go ahead this spring. http://www.foe.co.uk/what_we_do/the_bee_cause_home_map_39371.html

Recent news is that pressure is building at EU level for a ban on key pesticides – the European Food Safety Agency has announced that neonicotinoid pesticides should not be used on crops attractive to honey bees and called for a two-year moratorium on use of certain neonicotinoid pesticides.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/mar/03/pesticides-ban-editorial>

Wickes and B&Q are going to stop stocking certain garden chemicals.

Local Sustainable Transport Fund:

Reading has received approval for about £25 million spend from this fund which aims to:

- Support the local economy and facilitate economic development. The measures proposed will reduce congestion, improving the reliability and predictability of journey times and enhance access to employment and other essential services;
- Reduce carbon emissions by bringing about an increase in the volume and proportion of journeys made by lower carbon, more sustainable means of travel including walking and cycling;
- Help to deliver wider social and economic benefits, including accessibility and social inclusion for the community;
- Bring about improvements to air quality and increased compliance with air quality standards, and wider environmental benefits such as noise reduction;
- Actively promote increased levels of physical activity, encourage walking and cycling.

Latest Council report on this is available at Item 14 in <http://www.reading.gov.uk/meetings/details/3516/>

In East Reading there has been some positive work on walking and cycling improvements. The proposals are at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/residents/parking-road-and-travel/TransportStrategy/east-reading-1stf-transport-schemes/>

More questionable are large park-and-ride schemes being proposed in Wokingham which will just allow more and more people into Reading town centre but won't address car ownership or use.

There is a proposed Pedestrian Cycle Bridge over the River Thames and proposals for a cycle hire scheme of approximately 350 docking points at 30 locations served by 200 bicycles. See below for user-experience of the London scheme.

Barclays Cycle Hire Scheme in London

Michael Brice uses this scheme when he visits London and comments:

"I have joined the scheme and been issued with a membership key. So each time I hire a bike using my key, the system deducts £2 from me and I can then use the scheme for the next 24 hours with no further charge as long as I return each bike to a docking station within 30 minutes. I can use as many bikes as I like in this time. If I use one for more than 30 minutes, there will be an additional charge.

"As an alternative to the 24 hour option, there are also 10 day and annual memberships.

"The bikes are big and heavy, and feel very safe. They soak up speed humps and pot holes. They have built-in lights, and a small front luggage rack. But they certainly aren't fast, and the gearing is too low for my taste. Don't expect to be rushing around or squeezing through narrow gaps in the traffic.

"There are plenty of docking stations, but I have from time to time found the one at my destination to be full and have had to cycle on to the next one - there is a process to extend your 30 minutes to avoid an extra charge in these circumstances. Occasionally my key hasn't worked and I've had to call the helpdesk to be able to release a bike, annoying if you're in a rush, and I've never had an explanation as to the problem.

"There is a map of central London showing the docking stations, which is very useful to carry with you.

"The bikes are supposed to be in good condition, but if it fails in use, e.g. a puncture, you'd have to get it to a docking station, but that shouldn't be an issue as you are never far from one (but they can be tucked away down side streets, hence the value in carrying one of the maps).

"Dock the bike, and you're then free to take another one subject to a 5 minute wait. There is a button on each individual docking console that you can press to indicate a problem with that bike - this takes it out of use (red LED goes on, and no one can hire it) and presumably someone will come along and fix it or take it away."

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/roadusers/cycling/14808.aspx>

Clean British Energy:

This national FoE campaign is moving on to more work around the Energy Bill which is currently going through Parliament. http://foe.co.uk/what_we_do/clean_british_energy_clean_power_action_39060.html

Latest key issue is a proposal by MP Tim Yeo to require a decarbonisation target to be set next year instead of waiting until 2016 – after the next general election – to decide whether or not to set a target. It is hoped the Liberal Democrats will defy the Tories to defeat the government on this.

Reading Goes Up the League!

Sadly not the Royals in the Premiership, but Reading Borough Council has moved up the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) League Table and for 2011/2012 now stands 260th out of 2097 organisations.

The CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme (formerly known as the Carbon Reduction Commitment) is a mandatory carbon emissions reporting and pricing scheme to cover all organisations using more than 6,000MWh per year of electricity. At present all such organisations have to pay a tax of £12 per tonne of Carbon Dioxide. The league table position does not affect how much they pay but is 'reputational'. The sectors targeted by the Carbon Reduction Commitment scheme generate over 10% of UK Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions, around 55 MtCO₂.

The table is hard to understand but Reading's fairly high position suggests relatively good performance on emissions – although the improvement in position since last year is probably more due to a change in the scoring of the table. There have been criticisms of the scoring of this table and this will be the last year it is produced.

Reading's Weighted Score was 1462.4 – the best was 1900.25

Reading Council's Emissions were 14,617 Tonnes CO₂

Reading's scores were: Early Action Metric 6.0 %; Absolute Metric 29.49 %; Growth Metric 37.07 %.

<http://crc.environment-agency.gov.uk/pplt/web/plt/public/2011-12/CRCPerformanceLeagueTable20112012>

Reading Climate Change Strategy Revision.

The revision of the Reading Climate Change Strategy to run from 2013 to 2020 is progressing. Public consultation was launched at the beginning of November and ran until 14th December.

Consultation documents are on <https://www.snapsurveys.com/swh/surveylogin.asp?k=135003822252>. At our December meeting we reviewed the strategy and comments on each chapter were submitted via the website. A full listing of the comments we submitted is at www.readingfoe.org.uk/RCCP_FoE_Comments_13th_December.pdf

Comments are now being analysed and changes made to the strategy. Aim is now to publish in the summer.

Sustainability and Prosperity in a Globalising World:

Reading University has a Sustainability module as an option for first-year students – outlined on this link: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/modules/document.aspx?modP=RE1SPGW&modYR=1213> Topics covered are: Population growth and the 'environment-poverty nexus'; Energy; Waste management; Limits to growth; Climate change; Urban greening / Green architecture and procurement; Accessibility and mobility; Planning for sustainability and prosperity; Behavioural change / promotion of sustainable practices.

John is passing comments to a student who has taken local renewable energy as a project for this module.

The Next Generation:

We took stalls to lunchtime events as part of Reading University Green Week and at Reading College – to try to get FoE – and in particular the 'Young Friends of the Earth' - across to the students.

While a few interesting contacts were made, and conversations had, there didn't seem to be many very interested or concerned students ... but it probably only takes a few to start to make a difference and it may be that students respond best to initiatives from their peers.

Nutrient Challenge:

A new report – “Our Nutrient World: The challenge to produce more food and energy with less pollution” – from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) looks at issues around two key nutrients - Nitrogen and Phosphorous – and calls for much greater efficiency in fertiliser use.

Together they play an important role in the global and local sustainable development agendas. “The use of these nutrients is key to growing crops and thus to the world’s food security. However, in some parts of the world farmers do not have access to enough nutrients to grow crops and feed growing populations. But in many other parts of the world there is an ‘excess’ of nutrients in the environment as a result of industrial and agricultural activity and has profound impacts, from pollution of water supplies to the undermining of important ecosystems and the services and livelihoods they support.”

The consequences of not taking action include further global warming effects from increasing atmospheric N₂O (a greenhouse gas which is 300 times more radi-actively reactive than CO₂), continuing deterioration of water, air and soil quality, shortening human life, while threatening ecosystem services and biodiversity. The full damage cost has not yet been assessed, but annual global loss of ecosystem services including damage to fisheries from coastal N and P pollution-related hypoxia alone costs an estimated \$170 billion.

The report identified ten key actions:

1. Improving nutrient use efficiency in crop production,
2. Improving nutrient use efficiency in animal production,
3. Increasing the fertilizer equivalence value of ani-mal manure,
4. Low-emission combustion and energy-efficient systems, including renewable sources,
5. Development of NO_x capture and utilization technology,
6. Improving nutrient efficiency in fertilizer and food supply and reducing food waste,
7. Recycling nitrogen and phosphorus from waste water systems, in cities, agriculture and industry,
8. Energy and transport saving,
9. Lowering personal consumption of animal protein among populations consuming high rates (avoiding excess and voluntary reduction),
10. Spatial and temporal optimization of nutrient flows.

<http://www.gpa.unep.org/gpa-pollutant-source-categories/nutrients.html>

Millennium Development Goals:

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is starting to assess progress against the environmental MDG - Goal # 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability - and to consult on actions and revisions for the period beyond 2015.

Millennium Development Goal 7 has three targets:

- **Target 9:** *Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources.*
- **Target 10:** *Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.*
- **Target 11:** *Achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.*

Progress report states that there has been great success on eliminating ozone-depleting substances but there are also many criticisms:

- MDG 7 “*fails to address the motors driving impoverished populations from the countryside into cities.*”
- “*Failures to reach global targets in relation to halting biodiversity loss have added further stresses to vulnerable peoples and communities. Biodiversity, ecosystems and the services they provide are the foundations on which all people rely.*”

Among other points the future development framework will need to,:

- “*adequately reflect the importance of conserving and restoring natural systems as a component of strategies to reach other development targets*”

A future development framework needs to be more comprehensive regarding environmental sustainability and address priority areas, such as the ocean, for example, which were absent from the MDGs.

http://www.unep.org/urban_environment/PDFs/MDG7BackgroundPaper.pdf

Useful Websites etc.:

www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk
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/>

Pangbourne and Whitchurch Sustainability Group (PAWS) <http://www.pawsg.com/>

True Food Co-op: 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.fishonline.org/> gives info on over-fishing, fish to avoid, etc.

www.ejfoundation.org (Environmental Justice Foundation)

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

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

Reading FoE Officers

At our AGM on April 11th 2012 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.

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 2012/13

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 £8.00 / £5.00 (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.