

# Reading Friends of the Earth Newsletter Mar/Apr 2015



For more information: <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading> or [www.readingfoe.org.uk](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk)  
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 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. Meetings are open to all.

**March 11th** - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – report back from FoE SE Regional Gathering: climate, bees, elections, 'nature everywhere', transport – also update on our response to Council's Waste Minimisation Strategy.

**April 8th** – 8:00 p.m. at RISC - **General Meeting** – including brief AGM, report on previous year, and election of officers - details by e-mail later – expect to discuss bringing 'Run on Sun' solar schools campaign <https://www.foe.co.uk/page/about-run-on-sun> to Reading, if we don't cover that in March.

## **Other Activities with Reading FoE:**

**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April** – 10:00 am to 3:00 pm – **Beanpole Day at Caversham Court** – help needed for FoE stall <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/events/2015/04/25/beanpole-day-get-your-garden-ready-summer-0>

**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April** – 7:00 pm – RISC – “**Low Level Radiation – a local, national and international issue**”  
Pete Wilkinson, Director, Nuclear Information Service, speaking at a joint meeting with the Nuclear Awareness Group <http://www.nuclearawarenessgroup.org.uk/> - see below. (Check starting time on [www.readingfoe.org.uk](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk) ).

*Advance notice - dates for your diary ... Waterfest is on Saturday June 13<sup>th</sup> ... Climate Change lobby of Parliament is on Wednesday June 17<sup>th</sup> ... Caversham Festival is on the weekend of July 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>.*

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

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March** – **Earth Hour** – 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. – <http://earthhour.wwf.org.uk/> - turn on, tune in, switch off!

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April** – **TTIP campaigning day** – Global Justice Now in Reading town centre – no details yet.

**Green Drinks at RISC** – usually 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>

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## **2015 – Elections and Hustings**

There are national and local elections on 7<sup>th</sup> May – giving people the opportunity to look at the records, promises and aspirations of those who would represent us.

At FoE's South East Regional Gathering we were warned that environmental issues are way down on most voters' priority lists. Fracking could be an important issue in some key areas in the South East and Lancashire, but not in Reading where, it seems, there is nothing to drill for (see below), so (thankfully!) there are no specific local risks of contaminated water supplies, earthquakes, road closures, noise, dust and blots on the landscape.

People care about their living standards so warmth and health could lead into conversations about environmental issues – cold homes and air quality could be related to energy saving and transport policy areas. CO2 was not seen as a key issue by most people but flood risks could be linked to climate change.

FoE have said they will produce a list of environmental questions that could be put to politicians so that their views can be compiled and given publicity in a non-partisan manner.

In Reading it is likely that GREN (Greater Reading Environmental Network) will run an environmental 'hustings' meeting as it did last year but details are not yet available – see [www.gren.org.uk](http://www.gren.org.uk) for emerging details of this and other local hustings meetings run by other interest groups as they become available.

## **“Low Level Radiation – a local, national and international issue”**

The speaker at this joint Nuclear Awareness Group / Reading FoE meeting will be Pete Wilkinson, Nuclear Information Service Director, and former Greenpeace UK Campaign Director. He will be talking about flaws in assessment methods for the health impacts of low level radiation, recent studies which show evidence of a link between cancers and low level radiation, and how this evidence relates to radiation releases from AWE locally.

Low level radiation risks arise from naturally-occurring circumstances, and from accidental or routine releases of radioactive materials either from the nuclear energy fuel cycle or from the creation or use of nuclear weapons.

Pete Wilkinson has written:

“The health impacts of exposure to radiation remain an area of great uncertainty and much controversy. After Fukushima many governments (notably the UK, eager to protect its nascent nuclear renaissance from public antipathy) rushed to reassure citizens around the world that radiation exposure rates were 'insignificant' at the same time as we witnessed heartbreaking photographs of Japanese children being checked for contamination by a radiation worker clad in head-to-toe protective clothing.”

“The debate around low levels of radiation exposure and its effect has dogged the nuclear industry for decades. Current methods for setting limits for exposure are based on cancer data collected from the victims of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Essentially, the yardsticks developed from that data have not changed in 70 years. They amount to 'the larger the dose, the greater the impact' - a 'linear' theory describing the relationship between dose and health impact. But there has been uncertainty about the situation at very low doses where data is scarcest. Is there a threshold level at which exposure has no effect?”

Nuclear Awareness Group (NAG <http://www.nuclearawarenessgroup.org.uk/about> ) is a Reading-based local group which grew out of the Community Inquiry into AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield held in Reading in March 1994. As a watch-dog group, it acts on behalf of its members and the community to ensure that radioactive discharges from AWE continue to fall to the lowest possible level.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

Reading FoE responded in February to Reading’s consultation on its Waste Minimisation Strategy and the council has now suggested a few of us meet with them for detailed discussions.

Our response emphasised the importance of reducing the amount of waste created and the climate change arguments for keeping biodegradable material out of landfill. We recommended the Council should give serious consideration to anaerobic digestion (AD) for food waste and called for evidence to be made available on the environmental impacts of current and proposed methods of waste management.

Our full response is on <http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Documents/Waste%20Minimisation%202015%20RFoE.pdf>

### **Bee Cause Progress**

At our December meeting we discussed proposals for a Bee World on the corner of Trooper Potts Way and Vastern Road – a site just being vacated by the Reading Station up-grade team and in need of remedial work.

Joanna is to progress this with Reading Borough Council and Network Rail and we have had a site meeting to get advice from Earley Town Council’s Grahame Hawker who has managed planting on roadside sites in Earley – see this gallery of photographs ... <http://www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk/Flowers/FlowerBeds2014.asp>

And returning the favour of help from Earley with a Reading site, Michael has spotted a potential Bee World site in Earley by the side of Wokingham Road – a large grassy verge in need of remediation after damage by construction vehicles - which we have recommended to Grahame Hawker.

### **Traffic Growth on the M4 – Keep the Hard Shoulder from J3 to J12!**

In December 2014 Reading FoE worked with national FoE campaigners to start a regional e-campaign calling on people to respond to a consultation on plans to increase traffic on the M4 by converting the hard shoulder to use as an additional lane, requiring 11 bridges to be replaced, at a cost of up to £862 million. The report on the consultation is awaited <http://www.highways.gov.uk/roads/road-projects/m4-junctions-3-12/>.

Compared to traffic reduction, traffic growth will increase CO2 emissions and dependency on imported fuels - but in 758 pages the “Preliminary environmental information report” doesn’t assess the increase in CO2 emissions.

Now the Campaign for Better Transport has analysed the Highways Agency's air quality figures and released a critique of the proposals saying:

"People who live near this section of the M4 are exposed to dangerously dirty air that breaks legal limits. The UK Government has already been severely criticised in the courts for the slapdash way it approaches air pollution. The Highways Agency urgently needs to look again at this proposal and put public health above cramming yet more cars onto our roads."

They have called on the Highways Agency to amend its plans to, either:

1. Remove all-lane running from the proposals, reserving the hard shoulder only for congested times, as in the original Managed Motorway schemes, which still had beneficial effects on congestion. By not permanently widening the motorway, this is likely to remove a large part of the risk of creating induced traffic and worsening pollution ... or ...
2. Reduce the speed limit at all times to below 60 mph. This measure has been considered at other Smart Motorway locations and has been used to mitigate a similar breach of air pollution limits that would have been caused by the A556 Knutsford to Bowden scheme.

They have attracted media interest with this press release <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/campaigners-show-london-m4-widening-plans-will-break-law> which mentions Eton College and includes a link to their objection.

Their recent review of 19 months of opposition to the government's roads programme documents some successes - <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/blog/roads/040215-action-for-roads-review> - it includes a link to a downloadable fill-in-yourself poster saying '**New Roads Create New Traffic: I'd rather spend £30 billion on ...**'

### **Climate Change and the 'Road to Paris'**

The UN conference in Paris in December is a major opportunity to get important decisions taken with governments pledging actions. Governments are under intense pressure to agree a fair, binding new global treaty to slash greenhouse gas emissions and keep global temperature rise well below two degrees.

At the FoE South East Regional Gathering we were warned that while this will be a 'point in the road' it will not be 'the end of the road' – governments are still not ready to take the necessary decisions so even in the best case continuing pressure will be needed.

The Paris 'Conference of the Parties' 'COP21' takes place from 30<sup>th</sup> November to 12<sup>th</sup> December 2015, which is why there are so many activities planned for the next nine months. For up-to-date news see FoE's Climate Campaign Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FOEclimate/> - but here are a few:

**'This Changes Everything'**; 28<sup>th</sup> March - 9am to 6pm - Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London – speakers said to include Caroline Lucas, Naomi Klein, Russell Brand etc. Tickets £10.50 (or whatever you can afford). [www.thischangeseverything.co/ticketstransparency.html](http://www.thischangeseverything.co/ticketstransparency.html)

Also a conference of the '**Low Carbon Communities**' network will take place over the same weekend 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> March to plan and co-ordinate actions. <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/climate-change-new-directions-for-local-action-tickets-9630371701>

A mass lobby of Parliament 'The Big Climate Lobby' to influence newly-elected MPs is on Wednesday June 17<sup>th</sup> - 1pm to 4pm – run by the Climate Coalition (which includes FoE).

### **Fracking – not in our back yard**

Here are a few links which show why there are no plans to frack very near Reading.

This <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/.../energy/shaleGas/wealdShaleOil.html> from British Geological Survey which shows that Reading is outside area of search for the Weald Basin resources, and that within Weald Basin there's no useful gas but some potential oil. Also [http://www.fraw.org.uk/extreme\\_thames/index.shtml#index](http://www.fraw.org.uk/extreme_thames/index.shtml#index) which says we're over deep coal – but it's an unlikely source of coal-bed methane. This also mentions the exploration licence under Windsor.

FoE's Fracking Map is at [https://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/issues/uk\\_fracking\\_map\\_41274](https://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/issues/uk_fracking_map_41274) It works best if you zoom in and un-tick the 'licencing area' shading.

## Useful Websites etc.:

Friends of the Earth 'England, Wales and Northern Ireland' <http://www.foe.co.uk>

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

Reading Climate Action Network - <http://www.readingclimateaction.org.uk/>

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

Reading Sustainability Centre - <http://readingsustainabilitycentre.co.uk/>

Action AWE (Atomic Weapons Eradication) is a grassroots campaign of nonviolent actions dedicated to halting nuclear weapons production at the Atomic Weapons Establishment factories at Aldermaston and Burghfield. <http://actionawe.org/>

Greenlink Berkshire [www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk](http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk)

True Food Co-op: [www.truefood.coop](http://www.truefood.coop) - shop in Emmer Green.

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)

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

## Reading FoE Officers

At our AGM on April 9<sup>th</sup> 2014 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 receive and join in our day-to-day communications please send an email to [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 2014/15

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.