

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter Mar/Apr 2016

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



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. **But not this March – see below!** Most meetings include discussion of general topics – some have a particular focus or guest speakers. Meetings are open to all.

March 9th - 9:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – delayed start to allow members to attend Global Justice Now meeting on TTIP etc. (see below) which starts at 7:30.

April 13th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – including brief AGM for election of officers - discussion of current campaign areas – details by e-mail.

Other Activities with Reading FoE:

Saturday 23rd April – Beanpole Day – Caversham Court Gardens - help needed for FoE stall from about 10:00 to 15:00 - campaigning on pollinators and neonicotinoids – so opportunity to dress as bees (again)! Please volunteer.

Other Activities (not run by Reading FoE):

Wednesday 9th March – RISC 7:30 - **'Beyond Fair Trade – Stopping Corporate Exploitation'** - Nick Dearden, director of Global Justice Now, discussing the new generation of international trade deals – TTIP, CETA and TiSA.

Thursday 10th March – Transport Users' Forum + Sub-Comm – at RBC Offices, 6:30pm.
<http://www.reading.gov.uk/article/8774/Traffic-Management-Sub-Committee-10-MAR-2016>

Monday 14th March – Great Debate: Can Renewables meet our Electricity Needs? – UoR – book on link
<http://www.reading.ac.uk/15/about/newsandevents/Events/Event659696.aspx>

Wednesday 16th March – 7:45 - GREN Climate Forum – **Extreme Events and Climate Change** – discussion of local and global weather events - see below - Reading Quaker Meeting House, 2 Church Street, RG1 2SB.

Saturday 19th March – Friends of the Earth SE Regional Gathering – London – let us know if you plan to go
https://www.foe.co.uk/events/regional_national_gatherings

Wednesday 23rd March – UoR Lecture – Professor Camille Parmesan - **Wildlife in a Warmer World** – Henley Business School 19:30 – book at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/15/about/newsandevents/Events/Event659725.aspx>

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>

Repair Café – check website <http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/projects/reading-repair-cafe/>

Show the Love:

On Saturday 13th February seven Reading councillors joined climate campaigners, including supporters from Wokingham and Bracknell in a 'Show the Love' action outside the Civic Offices.

We were celebrating a successful Reading Borough Council motion which calls on the Royal Berkshire Pension Fund to stop investing in oil, gas, and coal companies.

Thanks to John Hoggett for the banner and encouragement to make it happen!



Show the Love continued:

'Showing the Love' for Fossil-Free Pensions on Valentine's eve were Labour Councillors Tony Page, Tony Jones, Liz Terry, Mohammed Ayub, Gul Khan and Deya Pal Singh, and Green Councillor Rob White, with campaigners from Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell co-ordinated by Reading Friends of the Earth.

From local councils to churches, universities to employers – we're all connected to institutions which shouldn't be supporting the fossil fuel industry. It is estimated that the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund has over 27 million pounds invested indirectly in fossil fuels.

Reading Borough Council motion passed 30th November 2015: "That the Managing Director write to Royal Berkshire Pension Fund and ask them to review and strengthen their own Ethical Investment statement, consider membership of the Institutional Investors Investment Forum with a view to avoiding new investment in the top 200 publicly-traded fossil fuel companies and to consider the possibility of divesting from fossil fuel investments (whether equities or corporate bonds issued by such companies) by 2020."

'Show the Love' was an initiative for Valentine's weekend promoted by the Climate Coalition and WWF. We achieved coverage in both getreading and Reading Chronicle. We called for rapid progress in getting other Berkshire local authorities to follow Reading's lead. The campaigners from Wokingham and Bracknell will be writing to their own councils.

Councillor Rob White started the divestment move by the Council, and has created an on-going petition to the Berkshire Pension Fund which is at <https://campaigns.gofossilfree.org/petitions/reading-divest-from-fossil-fuels> .

Once more unto the Bees, dear friends, once more:

FoE (along with many other organisations such as the Soil Association and Butterfly Conservation) is continuing to campaign against neonicotinoid pesticides which are applied as seed coatings.

Evidence is building that they may be contributing to the decline of birds and butterflies, as well as of bees. They remain in the environment and can be absorbed by wildflowers growing in field margins, appearing in nectar, pollen and foliage. Fifteen species of butterflies showed declines associated with neonicotinoid use <http://bit.ly/23cAJ6k>

This year we have a traditional 'postcards to MPs' campaign to promote with a striking new postcard <https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/bee-cause-mp-postcard-february-2015-99937.pdf>

Campaigner Tom Wright commented: "In December 2013, three neonics - clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiametoxam - were placed under EU restrictions for a minimum of two years. We expected to see a decision on what would happen next by the end of 2015. That didn't happen, and we've now heard the EU Commission doesn't expect to conclude its review and make recommendations until this time next year – January 2017 - at the earliest.

"That's 4-5 months later than we'd anticipated and means it'll be quite some time before the UK Government needs to make any sort of decision on the issue. The EU Commission's recommendation is likely to involve a vote from the member states but that obviously now won't be until 2017 either. See [This Guardian article](#) .."

Butterflies in decline:

Butterfly Conservation have reported on a forty-year fall in many butterfly populations since 1976. Habitat-specialist species showed a decrease of 45% in abundance and 62% in distribution, while for 'wider countryside' species the figures were 25% and 24%. 76% of UK resident and regular migrant butterflies declined in abundance or distribution while 47% of species increased in one or both measures. Over the last ten years there have been some improving trends for some species.

Butterfly Conservation say "These trends suggest pervasive deterioration of the environment and are likely to indicate declines of many other widespread insects, with knock-on impacts for animals further up food chains."

Reading Climate Forum

GREN has been granted funding by Reading Climate Action Network www.readingclimateaction.org.uk to run four meetings to discuss relevant topics with experts in the first half of 2016 – perhaps will be more in the autumn.

The first topic is **Extreme Events and Climate Change** - discussion of local and global weather events with local hydrologist and climate change specialist Chris Beales. What has been going on in recent years, and what may we expect to see in the future?

This meeting is on 16th March at 7:45 pm at Reading Quaker Meeting House, 2 Church Street, RG1 2SB. Please publicise this to your friends, contacts and colleagues – poster is at

http://www.gren.org.uk/resources/Poster_A4_v1.pdf – artwork to include in e-mail is at
http://chrisbeales.net/media/extreme%20events%20poster%205_sm.jpg

The themes of the next three events are likely to be: Carbon Pricing - and how to spend it; COP21 and its outcomes; Climate change and agriculture.

LED Street Lighting:

At our February meeting Simon Nicholas visited to tell us about the campaign against blue-rich LED streetlights.

While LEDs offer lower electricity consumption than sodium lights campaigners are concerned that their light contains much larger amounts of short-wave (blue) radiation that they argue can have adverse effects on human health, eyesight and wildlife.

Early adopters had fitted some very 'blue' lights but now lower 'correlated colour temperature' (CCT) versions are available with little penalty in terms of cost or electricity consumption.

Complainants had been advised to fit black-out curtains to their bedrooms. Westminster Council has turned down high CCT lights for aesthetic reasons. Simon provided some links to reference material which are at:
<http://www.anjoro.plus.com/downloads/LED%20STREET%20LIGHTING%20REFERENCE%20MATERIAL.pdf>

'Smart M4' Examination:

The examination into proposals for a 'managed motorway' with 'all lane running' is over and its report will go to the government by 3rd June. FoE, Reading FoE, and Campaign for Better Transport were leading critics.

Highways England's simulations for the wider area including the M4 suggest that traffic growth will:

- Increase journey times ... unless there are substantial changes to the off-M4 road system ... and ...
- Increase CO2 emissions ... unless fleet composition and fuel efficiency are very different from modelled values

While the effect on journey times is modest in 2022 (extra capacity almost copes with 16% increased traffic volume) by 2037 average trip time is 4 to 5 minutes (12% to 14%) longer than in 2009. Average journey time in 2009 was 36 minutes – in 2037 with high traffic growth it is simulated to be 41.1 minutes.

Highways England retort "To suggest that the case for the Scheme is invalidated because it does not alone address the results of growth up to 2037 which will affect the other 42,000 links and over 5,000 junctions across the model's study area is, at best, misconceived."

However experts cast doubt on the simulations - retired traffic engineer David Green wrote: "*My fundamental concerns remain about the apparent underestimation of future traffic and particularly the inability of existing feeder roads and junctions to handle even this low forecast of traffic growth.*"

On CO2 the simulations show 518,361 tonnes in 2013 and 559,424 tonnes in 2037 – an almost 8% increase.

Some ground has been gained by campaigners for noise barriers – an 'Enhanced Noise Mitigation Strategy' has been proposed – but this will still leave many properties suffering high noise levels. Highways England say "The further away the receptor is from the noise barrier, the smaller is the noise reduction provided by the noise barrier."

The effect on air quality was debated – with Highways England claiming that they were compliant with legal requirements, and objectors arguing that they were not, and that the VW scandal invalidated the simulations.

On safety it seems that a 3-lane managed motorway would be much safer than a 4-lane smart motorway with all lane running, but that will be safer than the present setup, allowing Highways England to claim 'nil detriment'.

We think the cost – close to £1 billion – would be better spent on sustainable transport solutions.

Air Quality:

Reading FoE was critical of the Council's proposed update of its Air Quality Strategy – see comments at http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Documents/160111_RFoE_AQ.pdf . At a recent GREN meeting it was proposed that we should work with Tony Cowling and the Reading Sustainability Centre, who are also potentially interested, to bring this issue to public attention over the next six months or so.

Green Park Turbine Tours:

As warmer, drier weather approaches, if you want to plan a tour of the Green Park Turbine for interested school or adult groups contact <http://www.nrgreduced.com/contact/>

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

True Food Co-op: www.truefood.coop - shop in Emmer Green.

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)

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

Reading FoE Officers

At our AGM on April 8th 2015 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 .

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 2015/16

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.