

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter Mar/Apr 2017

For more information: <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading> or www.readingfoe.org.uk
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Diary:

General Meetings: Reading FoE usually meets on the **second Wednesday of each month** in Room 1 upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 8:00 p.m. **But not this March!** Most meetings include discussion of general topics – some have a particular focus or guest speakers. Meetings are open to all.

March 8th – 7:30 p.m. at RISC – “**Change Climate Finance**. A campaign to get banks to support clean energy and abandon fossil fuels.” A joint meeting with ‘Global Justice Now’ in RISC Conference Hall followed by refreshments. Many thanks to GJN and Christian Aid!

- At present, banks invest much more money in mining for coal and drilling for oil than in renewables. **Siobhan Grimes**, Regional Administrator of Christian Aid, will tell us how we can encourage them to shift money away from investing in dirty fossil fuels and towards investing in clean, renewable energy and being part of the solution to climate change. <http://groups.globaljustice.org.uk/reading/>
- Reading FoE members will probably gather briefly in Room 1 (around 9:30?) after refreshments with GJN to discuss up-coming Reading FoE activities but we will not be there from 8:00.

April 12th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – topics and details by e-mail – including brief AGM to review the last year, look forward, and elect Co-ordinator and Treasurer. Also preparation for Beanpole Day (see below).

Other Activities with Reading FoE:

“Call for Compassion” – Wednesday 22nd March - 7:00 to 8:00 pm at Queen Victoria’s Statue (outside Old Town Hall) – a third local gathering with banners and torches – to create a Circle of Light - to show support for Equality, Peace and Environmental Justice. This is an independently-organised event which we are supporting.

Saturday, April 22nd – Beanpole Day – 10:00 to 15:00 - our first outdoor event of the year – helpers needed at Caversham Court Gardens, Church Road, Caversham, to continue the conversation about government policies on bees, wildlife, and agriculture – and other campaign areas. Will see what national actions, petitions etc. are available. <http://www.bbwt.org.uk/events/2017/04/22/beanpole-day-get-your-garden-ready-summer>

Other Activities (not run by Reading FoE):

Wednesday 15 March - 7.00 pm - Great Debate: **Are Autonomous Electric Cars the Future of Personal Transport?** Palmer G10, Whiteknights campus, University of Reading. Engineering Institutions event. Details and registration on the link <http://www.reading.ac.uk/15/about/newsandevents/Events/Event710334.aspx>

Sunday 19th March 12:00 to 4:30 - **Repair Cafe** rLab, C1 Weldale Street, RG1 7BX ... also ... **Saturday 22nd April** 12:00 to 4:30 – at New Hope Centre, 95 York Road, RG1 8DU. www.readingrepaircafe.org.uk

Saturday 29th and Sunday 30th April – People’s Marches for Climate, Justice and Jobs – lots of them – Washington DC on 29th <https://peoplesclimate.org/> - London on 29th (no details yet) <https://www.campaigncc.org/> and Reading on 30th <https://www.facebook.com/events/1621970368111486/> (may be updates in April).

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>

**Call for
Compassion:**
Spreading light in
Reading –
20th January and
22nd February



Call for Compassion:

Tanja has now run two 'Call For Compassion' events and proposes a third on Wednesday 22nd March. Her aim is to create a symbolic 'Circle of Light' to counter the threats of darkness from the new administration in the USA. There have been a number of events with similar aims in London and elsewhere – as well as many in America!

The first in Reading - on Monday 20th January – the day of Donald Trump's inauguration – was well attended and achieved good coverage in getreading <http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/reading-berkshire-news/anti-donald-trump-campaigners-hold-12486181> and in other local media. Radio Berkshire broadcast an interview with Tanja and BBC South Today featured similar events in Portsmouth and Southampton. There were songs and torches and lanterns.

At the second, on Wednesday 22nd February, there was a smaller crowd but more interaction and discussion.

Tanja Rebel writes:

"A big thank you to those who supported Call for Compassion in Reading last Wednesday. A very good sound system allowed passionate speeches to be heard - about the current threats to World Peace, Equality and the Environment. It was very inspiring to hear these speeches and there will be more opportunity for this at our next event.

"The formation of a local Stop Trump Alliance was discussed, suggested name: 'PEPP: Peace, Equality and Planet Protection'. Or we could just keep calling it 'Call for Compassion'. If any of you have any suggestions for further action/improvement on this front, kindly email me.

"Next Call for Compassion will be on Wednesday the 22nd of March, 7pm this time as the sunset will be later and we want the light circle to have maximum effect! Please put this date in your diary and invite all your friends! This event is meant to be inclusive and address *all* harmful consequences of Trump's - and other despots' - destructive policies, from the threat to minorities, women, the LGTB community, freedom of the press, peace and democracy to the harmful consequences for the Planet itself."

Air Quality:

Air quality has continued to make the national and local news – diesel scrappage schemes are being widely discussed along with clean air zones and other possible initiatives. <http://www.express.co.uk/life-style/cars/774656/Diesel-scrappage-scheme-UK-cars-Liverpool-ban-air-pollution>

John had acquired a diffusion tube for measuring NO2 from FoE - Enrico positioned it near Reading Station for a fortnight before Christmas. This has now been processed and average concentration came out at 61.9ug/m3 so for this period was well over the EU limit of 40ug/m3 for annual average concentration.

FoE has now supplied us with 10 more tubes which are currently deployed around Reading and Earley – results from 4-week sampling periods should be back in April.

FoE is running a petition calling on government to phase out diesel vehicles by 2025 – please sign it and circulate! <https://act.foe.co.uk/ditchdiesel>

In January Reading Borough Council agreed a Health and Well-being Strategy. The Strategy does not specifically mention Air Quality (although some consultation respondents had mentioned it) but does identify the importance of 'Increasing Physical Activity' and aims to "Promote walking and cycling both for leisure and active travel" (Page D41 of <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/6650/item9-HWBStrategy-Report/pdf/item9-HWBStrategy-Report.pdf>)

Urban Congestion

1/. Reading Green Party put forward a motion to Council in February calling for a report later this year on a possible **Workplace Parking Levy** scheme that would match the needs of Reading, saying:

"This Council notes that a 'A Workplace Parking Levy' is a small annual charge on employers who provide workplace parking. Following the 2000 Transport Act it has been successfully implemented in Nottingham where it raises around 9 million pounds per year. Reading Borough Council now charges residents for its Resident Parking Schemes, and it is fair and proportionate that it also looks at making a charge for business parking.

"It is intended to:

- reduce rush-hour congestion and air pollution on Reading's roads by incentivizing a shift to more sustainable methods of transport; bus, bike, car-share and walking
- raise money for increased investment and support for sustainable transport solutions such as public transport and better cycling infrastructure
- manage demand for workplace parking provision

The Council's response was to amend the motion to delete the proposal.

2/. Giving evidence to the **Commons Transport Select Committee's inquiry on urban congestion** Cycling UK's Policy Director Roger Geffen MBE outlined how creating space for cycling made our city streets more efficient, allowing people to travel more swiftly and safely without depending on motor vehicles. This in turn would bring additional benefits such as cleaner air, improved physical and mental wellbeing, safer streets and town centres that attract people and businesses alike.

"Cycle lanes can take large numbers of polluting vehicles off the road, with a typical road lane carrying an average of 2,000 cars per hour or 14,000 bicycles. The idea that cycle lanes actually worsen congestion and increase pollution overall is a classic example of 'fake news'."

<http://www.cyclinguk.org/press-release/2017-02-28/space-cycling-will-improve-peak-hour-traffic-flow-says-cycling-body>

GREN Events: Reading Climate Forum

Greater Reading Environmental Network (www.gren.org.uk) has been granted funds from Reading Climate Change Partnership to run a third series of 'Reading Climate Forum' events in the coming months – programme is in preparation. Last year's events are listed at <http://chrisbeales.net/readingclimateforum/>

Heathrow Expansion and Climate Change

John and Barbara attended a consultation event near Bracknell where Department of Transport were exhibiting about their 'Airports National Policy Statement' to set the requirements for a Northwest Runway at Heathrow Airport proposed to be built by 2030. There didn't seem to be anything to like about this proposal but it's too complex to summarise all the statistics and impacts here. The DoT said that the display material would go on-line but I can't find it so we must either wade through the official documents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/heathrow-expansion-draft-airports-national-policy-statement> or look at an unofficial summary such as <http://stopheathrowexpansion.co.uk/sevenhurdlesofheathrow/>

FoE have an on-line petition against this <https://act.foe.co.uk/act/stand-against-heathrow>

The event also presented material on the proposed 'UK Airspace Policy'. Government claims that "Our current airspace system is inefficient and means passengers face longer journeys and delays as airspace becomes more congested. This will only get worse - it is expected that by 2030 there will be 3,100 days' worth of delays – 50 times the amount seen in 2015, along with 8,000 cancellations a year." Aim is to find a compromise between noise, air quality, climate change and economic factors. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-policy-on-the-design-and-use-of-uk-airspace>

Both consultations close on 25th May.

Reading Climate Change Partnership (RCCP) and Climate Change Strategy:

Tricia Marcouse has taken over from John Booth as GREN representative on the RCCP Board. Revision of the Reading Climate Change Strategy is in progress and is expected to go to public consultation in late February.

Threats to Kennet Mouth and the Thames Riverbank

Long-standing ideas – opposed by many environmental campaigners over the last 20 years - for a park-and-ride site at Broken Brow (PNR) and a bus-way across the Kennet (MRT) to provide a route to central Reading.

The PNR has planning permission and an application for funding from the Local Economic Partnership is expected to be considered on 16th March. Local campaigners have so far been denied sight of the 'business case' to be presented so have been unable to criticise it.

Reading have said the MRT will require an Environmental Impact Assessment to accompany its planning application and their Planners have found the proposals for the EIA wanting, saying:

- it fails to cover the scope of the entirety of the scheme, which should be the MRT scheme PLUS the PNR
- consideration of alternatives is inadequate.
- the magnitude of effects is often considered to be greater than described and must be covered fully

It is good that the two schemes will be considered together and the scope will be wider – but the Planning Committee may still find reasons to allow the scheme.

Government 25-year Plans Awaited:

FoE warn that consultations on 25-year plans for Environment, and for Food, Farming and Fisheries, are overdue and could be launched any time. These will be useful topics to put across at Beanpole Day.

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 13th 2016 Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were re-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 2016/17

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.