

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter Mar/Apr 2018

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 in March 2018!** Most meetings include discussion of general topics – some have a particular focus or guest speakers. Meetings are open to all.

Wednesday March 21st - 7:30 pm at RISC – **Reading Transport Plan: Issues and Options** – public meeting looking at Congestion, Clean Air, Climate and Cost – speakers including Dr. John Walker on Road Pricing, John Sharpe (SOAR) on the transport evidence (not) supporting East Reading Mass Rapid Transit – see next page.

Wednesday April 11th - 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting** – topics by e-mail later – will include brief AGM to elect officers etc.

Other Activities with Reading FoE:

Saturday April 21st – Beanpole Day – please offer to help on our stall at Caversham Court Gardens – expect to be campaigning on improving local habitats for pollinators and issues around the government's 25-year plan for the environment.

Other Activities (not run by Reading FoE so check for changes):

Saturday 10th March – **FoE SE Gathering – London** – lots of workshops including Tanja on Light and Campaign for Better Transport on roads - booking required https://www.facebook.com/events/1884996205089119/?active_tab=about

Monday 12th March – 19:00 – refreshments from 18:00 - **The Great Debate – Engineering Better Food Systems** UoR – <http://www.reading.ac.uk/15/about/newsandevents/Events/Event749256.aspx>

Tuesday 13th March – 15:00 – Reading Climate Forum visit to **Reading University 'Energy Trail'** – visiting Carrington Building's Ground Sourced Heat and the Combined Heat and Power plant. www.gren.org.uk/events

Wednesday 14th March – 7:30 - UoR Public Meeting **"The Bee's Needs: How to Save the World's Pollinators"** <http://www.reading.ac.uk/15/about/newsandevents/Events/Event749253.aspx> . We will take FoE leaflets and flyers.

Sunday 18th March – **Sunday Assembly on Climate Change** – Professor Ed Hawkins - Irish Centre – 10:30 <https://www.facebook.com/events/1832247940194356/> - and – celebrating the Equinox with greenspirit – Brendan James – St James' Church – 6:00 pm **"The Divine within Creation"** 6:00 pm <https://www.greenspirit.org.uk/localgroups2/reading/reading-calendar/>

Saturday 24th March – **No Idling Action** – Reading Borough Council - <http://www.reading.gov.uk/idlingaction>

Sunday 22nd April – Tanja Rebel presents **'The Eco-Philosophical Journey'** – 6:00 pm at RISC - celebrating Earth Day with greenspirit <https://www.greenspirit.org.uk/localgroups2/reading/reading-calendar/>

Repair Cafe – third weekend of month – not sure of details for 2018 so see www.readingrepaircafe.org.uk and <https://www.facebook.com/ReadingRepairCafe>

Reading Bicycle Kitchen – 'pop-up' events in various locations – see <http://www.readingbicyclekitchen.org/>

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>

Artist's impression of East Reading Mass Rapid Transit impact on banks of Thames near Kennet Mouth



Reading Local Transport Plan: Issues and Options

The Council is working to revise this plan, and Air Quality and the East Reading Mass Rapid Transit are vital local issues, so we decided to run a public meeting to review the issues and gather evidence, arguments, and supporters. This will be on Wednesday 21st March at 7:30 in the conference hall at RISC.

Aim is to raise awareness and improve understanding of:

- road pricing, congestion charging, low emission zones
- issues and options around revision of Reading's transport strategy
- transport issues around East Reading MRT

A revised plan must tick all the boxes of Congestion, Clean Air, Climate, and Cost.

- Jim Dunning (a retired town planner) will ask "should we provide for demand?";
- Reading FoE members will talk about the future regional traffic figures and emissions modelled for the 'Smart M4', and about local air quality;
- John Sharpe (of Save Our Ancient Riverside) has agreed to speak about the MRT traffic figures;
- Dr. John Walker (author of "Road Pricing: Technologies, economics and acceptability") will give a presentation; and
- Adrian Lawson and John Lee (officers of Reading Cycle Campaign) have said they will contribute.

Current plan 'LTP3' is at

http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/2421/Local-Transport-Plan-2011-26/pdf/Local_Transport_Plan_2011-26.pdf

Reading FoE comments on draft version of LTP3 are at http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/LTP3_RFoE.doc – essentially it read more like an issues and options document than an action plan!

Broken Brow Park and Ride:

People have been horrified at the devastation of Broken Brow as clearance work started for Wokingham's Park and Ride. Trees, shrubs and much more have been cut down. Presumably the Council wanted to make rapid progress so it was important to do this by the end of February before the bird-nesting season. There are plans to re-locate protected slow-worms from the site and so the earliest development work can start is July. See videos on <https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurAncientRiverside/> .

Save Our Ancient Riverside (SOAR) have raised questions about the legality of the land acquisition and designation process, and whether best practice for reptile survival and relocation is being followed. Conditions of the planning permission required detailed plans to be approved in writing before work started ... but work started on 8th February and the approval did not appear on Wokingham's website until 21st February leaving a negative amount of time for public scrutiny. We do not understand why an Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan, as required by the planning condition set in November 2016, was not delivered until January 2018.

East Reading Mass Rapid Transit:

The impact seen on Broken Brow is a small indication of the effect on wildlife and open space that the East Reading Mass Rapid Transit route would have if it is built across Kennet Mouth – the route runs close to the Thames and through the woodland towards Tesco.

We understand that Reading is now making changes to the MRT proposals – perhaps as a result of continuing objections from the Environment Agency. Among other points the EA has said the bridge over the Kennet must be higher than planned to allow bigger boats to get through, there are unresolved issues on development in the flood zone, and there is an issue about loss of a Local Wildlife Site to provide replacement car parking for Tesco.

The MRT is now expected to go to planning committees in summer of 2018. John and Ellie are drafting objections on Reading FoE's behalf on 'Air Quality' and 'Open Space and Health' respectively. On the Council's figures it will have a negligible effect on air quality and on traffic densities on the A4. The people who benefit will be people who take the buses over Kennet Mouth - travelling between the town centre and Wokingham or beyond; the people who lose will be the local people who used to walk along the riverbank, and taxpayers whose £25 million could be better spent.

To see others' objections, and to make your own:

Wokingham: <http://planning.wokingham.gov.uk/FastWebPL/welcome.asp> use application number 172048

Reading: http://planning.reading.gov.uk/fastweb_PL/welcome.asp use application number 171108.

Reading Alumni lecture by Craig Bennett – CEO of FoE:

Craig Bennett's recent lecture is on-line at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4uCs1UDLsc&feature=youtu.be> – he recalls campaigning on Air Quality with Reading FoE in Market Place in about 1991, and riffs on 'progress traps'.

'Clean Air Everywhere – In Reading!' – Client Earth Win Again!

Our petition, presented to the Council in November, had over 250 signatures on paper and over 150 on the e-petition so could claim an impressive total of over 400 gathered in less than two months.

The petition text said:

“I call for a new air quality action plan to be put in place by 2018 with the necessary resources to cut all pollutant levels to below World Health Organisation guidelines by 2020.”

Enrico plans to follow this up with a formal question to the next Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee on 19th March.

In the High Court on February 21st Client Earth won a third victory over the government. Judge Mr Justice Garnham declared the government's failure to require action from 45 local authorities with illegal levels of air pollution in their area unlawful. The UK must finalise new plans for England by 5th October 2018

The Judge ordered ministers to require local authorities to investigate and identify measures to tackle illegal levels of pollution in 33 towns and cities as soon as possible – as 12 of the 45 are projected to have legal levels by the end of 2018. <https://www.clientearth.org/government-loses-third-air-pollution-case-judge-rules-air-pollution-plans-unlawful/>

Reading is 19th on the list – modelling says it will be legal on NO2 by 2020 – so we hope Council and government will very soon find ways to take effective action to reduce the numbers of the most polluting vehicles. Defra intends to use Ministerial Directions – a rarely-used technical power – to formally mandate the local authorities to investigate and identify measures to tackle air pollution in their areas, with the aim to “identify any additional measures that could bring forward compliance with nitrogen dioxide limits as soon as possible”. For more detail on Oxford see <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/698/landmark-legal-ruling-leads-to-government-pledging-support-to-help-oxford-city-council-tackle-oxford-s-toxic-air-pollution>

In the meantime Reading Borough Council has launched an initiative to create teams of Local Air Quality Champions to address people with their engines idling, saying: we will provide you with:

- Training that will arm you with air pollution facts, so that you can talk confidently to drivers.
- Hints and tips on how to approach people and be persuasive in a short time period.
- Skills to facilitate an educational game, which draws out the learning elements of play.

Sign up at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/idlingaction>

Plastics recycling:

Reading and Wokingham are starting to accept tin foil and more plastics in doorstep recycling collections.

<http://www.fccenvironment.co.uk/re3.html>. This is presumably good news but we would like to understand how this can be done, when for many years Councils have been saying it is not possible and China has just announced it won't take UK plastics any more.

Light Warrior on Blast 1386:

Tanja's recent interview on BLAST 1386 can be heard at <https://www.mixcloud.com/Communitymatters/2018cm018-13-feb-tanya-rebel/> - about 34 minutes interview then music. She covers bike lights, streetlights, car lights - with emphasis on road safety (see <http://www.lightmare.org/>) and impacts on human health and wildlife (see: <http://www.lightmare.org/>) and debates issues around safe and speedy cycling with the presenter.

Revision of Reading Plan:

The Local Plan is being revised – <http://www.reading.gov.uk/newlocalplan> - and will be submitted to government soon. We don't yet know if we will be invited to take part in the public examination which will probably be in the autumn.

Our comments on Pre-Submission Draft are at

http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Documents/RFoE_Rdg_Plan_Jan_2018.pdf

Heathrow Expansion:

Heathrow Airport's consultation closes on 28th March. This is not an official government consultation so treat with caution. Say you don't accept any of the options for Expansion and not respond at all on Airspace consultation.

<https://www.heathrowconsultation.com/respond-to-the-consultation/>

Prevent developers & land speculators from 'Gaming the System' in UK housing.

New on-line petition from a Conservative Wokingham town councillor: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/212794>

- Change the five year land supply to develop the right number of houses in the right places in accordance with a sustainable, relevant and up-to-date Local Plan.
- Introduce a local measure of pipeline & delivery of homes to ensure that non-performing developers or land speculators can be identified.

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 12th 2017 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 2017/18

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.