

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter March/April 2019

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

Wednesday March 13th – 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting** – topics expected to include summer stalls for Reading FOE, revision of Reading Local Transport Plan, and Extinction Rebellion's local campaigning.

Wednesday April 10th - 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting including brief AGM** – topics by e-mail later. AGM covers election of co-ordinator and treasurer (nominations please) and setting of subscriptions.

Other Activities with Reading FoE:

Saturday April 13th – Reading FoE stall at **Beanpole Day** – Caversham Court. Talking about government's 25-year environment plan and implications of whatever Brexit deal has been reached by then.

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

Tuesday March 12th – 19:30 – the Warehouse, Cemetery Junction – **Extinction Rebellion Reading** – making plans for Reading, Wokingham and London. <https://www.facebook.com/xrReading/>

Wednesday March 20th – UoR Public Lecture - **Britain's Housing Crisis: Designing Future Homes & Cities** - Palmer building 7:30 – booking advised. <http://www.reading.ac.uk/news-and-events/Events/Event790537.aspx>

Thursday 28th March - **The Future of the Reading Diamond in the Thames Valley ... and ...**

Thursday 25th April - **Smart City Cluster in the Thames Valley** – 18:00 to 19:00 - Room G01, building L022, London Road campus.

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/15/about/newsandevents/Events/www.reading.ac.uk/architecture/architecture-public-lectures.aspx>

Repair Cafe – usually third weekend of month – <http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/projects/reading-repair-cafe/>

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>

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"Beyond COP 21 Symposium" at Wellington College
(Reading FoE stall in front of Battle of Waterloo)



Reading Climate Emergency Declaration
– with Councillors Page and Brock, Extinction Rebellion,
Berkshire Greenpeace, and friends young and old:



Photo: Tony Goodchild

Reading 'Climate Emergency' Declaration

After Extinction Rebellion Reading (XRR) started a petition calling for Reading to declare a 'Climate Emergency' Councillor Page announced that he would put a proposal to the Full Council on 26th February. We arranged for Councillors to receive the Friends of the Earth leaflet on climate change and the IPPR summary report <https://www.ippr.org/files/2019-02/risk-and-environment-feb19-summary.pdf> in their documents at the meeting.

A large crowd gathered outside for a photo-call and then the petition was presented early in the meeting at Item 4 and the proposal was debated at Item 11 after the budget debate. It was good to hear Councillors from different parties speaking in support. To find the relevant sections of the video click through from links further down the web-page. https://channel.royalcast.com/readingboroughcouncil#!/readingboroughcouncil/20190226_2

After lobbying by XRR the declaration had been strengthened with a pledge to aim for carbon neutrality by 2030 – although this was not a commitment and will depend on government support. The final text of the approved declaration is at <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s3743/item11-ClimateChange-ALTERED.pdf>

'Beyond COP21 Symposium'

This event at Wellington College on February 13th was organised by Peter Milne (Target4Green www.target4green.com) and Ana Romero (Head of Sustainability at Wellington College). Thanks to them and to Steve, Charlotte, Tricia, Tracey and Kate for coming to engage with the students.

The showcase for sustainability issues was addressed by her Excellency Guisell Morales-Echaverry, Nicaraguan Ambassador to the UK, who spoke passionately about Nicaragua's 'green revolution' and about how her country has become more vocal on the international stage.

Hundreds of pupils from three schools attended to hear of progress since the 2015 'Paris Agreement' to address climate change, and to discuss the United Nations' Sustainable Development goals.

Reading Friends of the Earth was one of fifteen organisations with stalls in the exhibition. We carried out a survey of students' opinions:

- three quarters of the sample were very or fairly confident that average temperatures were rising
- almost all agreed that human activity was driving this, with a substantial minority thinking natural causes also played a part
- two-thirds thought everyone should be responsible for addressing the effects of climate change and many thought our government and world leaders should be taking action
- while most thought they were at least quite well-informed about the issues many were keen to learn more about how they could make a difference.

Reading FoE press release and photo was featured in Wokingham Paper and Bracknell News.

More news on climate change

Parliament debated climate change on Thursday 28th February. Of our local MPs only Richard Benyon (Conservative, Newbury) spoke. John Redwood, Matt Rodda and Alok Sharma were not recorded as having attended. Good speeches from Layla Moran and Caroline Lucas, and from almost everyone who bothered to attend. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-02-28/debates/9E4B3F01-254A-4806-BA5D-4CE3F3C52C16/NetZeroCarbonEmissionsUK>

The Green Party has started a national petition calling on parliament to declare a Climate Emergency. <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/climateemergency/> - signatures welcome!

Erica Charles, climate campaigner and MD of Reading-based Spirit Solar <https://www.spiritenergy.co.uk/>, contributed a blog on 'Domestic Solar plus battery storage' to the Energy Saving Trust <https://t.co/mplqvJO9QL>

'Global Justice Now' held a conference 'Growth, degrowth and climate justice' in London on March 2nd. This note gives an impression of their thinking. <https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/blog/2019/mar/1/degrowth-could-be-answer-climate-crisis-five-takeaways-our-climate-justice>

'Clean Air Everywhere!' – but not in Reading in 2017!

National FoE accessed Council data from the most recent local authority annual Air Quality Status Reports submitted to government and found 15 locations in Reading in 2017 which breached the annual Air Quality Objective for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) levels. Their press release was picked up by Reading Chronicle.

For values see the interactive map at <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1nxsB438ulxBcXx0m8FpfT-3ULszPc6Ka&ll=51.50723200547109%2C-1.0933220703125243&z=11>

Press Release is at <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/clean-air/nearly-two-thousand-locations-across-england-wales-and-northern-ireland-breaching-air>

Fracking:

A successful judicial review brought by 'Talk Fracking' found that the National Planning Policy Framework was wrong to classify shale gas as leading to a low-carbon economy in Paragraph 209a:

209. Minerals planning authorities should:

- a) recognise the benefits of on-shore oil and gas development, including unconventional hydrocarbons, for the security of energy supplies and supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy; and put in place policies to facilitate their exploration and extraction;

A separate case brought by National FoE to declare the NPPF illegal was lost but may go to appeal.

<https://drillordrop.com/2019/03/06/breaking-campaigners-win-court-challenge-over-government-support-for-fracking/>
<https://drillordrop.com/2017/05/24/government-misled-public-and-parliament-over-shale-gas-carbon-emissions-new-research/>

FoE have supported an on-going case at the Court of Appeal challenging Ineos' injunction to prevent peaceful protest. The Ineos injunctions prohibited people from interfering with the lawful activities of Ineos staff and contractors and outlawed trespass and what was described as unlawful and unreasonable obstruction of the highway. This included slow walking, climbing on vehicles, and lock-on protests.

The argument is that the injunction represents an attack on the right to protest without facing the fear of arrest and imprisonment. <https://drillordrop.com/2019/03/04/campaigners-bring-test-case-against-chilling-protest-injunctions/>

Reading Local Transport Plan:

We now understand that Reading's revision of its Local Transport Plan is not likely to go out to consultation until summer – rather later than anticipated. A note from Reading FoE was sent to the SEPT committee in February calling for the consultation to include simulations of different scenarios to show how the proposals would address climate change, air quality and congestion. http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/transport/RFoE_LTP4_2019_02.pdf

Reading Cycle Campaign plan a protest ride on March 23rd – focussed on Vastern Road Roundabout and the new bridge over the Thames.

<https://www.getreading.co.uk/news/reading-berkshire-news/reading-cyclists-set-protest-ride-15930072>

Pesticides over-used?

Friends of the Earth have put up a blog by a farmer calling for a reduction in pesticide use in UK farming - arguing that adopting a low-input approach to farming, despite lower yields, can be actually more profitable - <https://bit.ly/2VN5sIF> this leads to a FoE petition calling for a commitment to a clear and ambitious target to reduce the use of pesticides in the UK <https://act.friendsoftheearth.uk/act/shape-future-our-countryside>

Astronomer Royal focuses on Earth:

ON THE FUTURE: TECHNOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSES IN 2050 AND BEYOND. In a speech to the House of Lords Prof. Martin Rees commented on global prospects for humanity, science and robotics.

"Our Earth has existed for 45 million centuries. But this century is special: it's the first when one species, ours, has the planet's future in its hands. We're deep in the anthropocene." ...

"It's a dangerous delusion to think that space offers an escape from Earth's problems. Dealing with climate change on Earth is a doddle compared to terraforming Mars. There's no 'Planet B' for ordinary risk-averse people."

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2019/march/lord-speakers-lectures-lord-rees-technology-and-environment-2050-/>

Heathrow Court Action

FoE's challenge will be heard on 11th March. The argument is that the decision to build the third runway is unlawful due to its failure to consider the climate change and sustainable development implications of the project and the consequences on future generations <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change/heathrow-legal-challenges-cleared-takeoff> .

Oxford-Cambridge Expressway:

The 'No Expressway Alliance' <https://www.noexpresswayalliance.org/> has an 'Activists Conference' on 30th March at Bicester <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/stopping-the-expressway-a-no-expressway-alliance-conference-tickets-56030052395> . Anyone who would like to represent our group at this please get in touch.

BBOWT has issued a claim in the High Court, challenging the government's failure to commission a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) as part of the process of selecting a 'Growth Corridor' www.bbowl.org.uk/expressway

Groundswell 2019:

In 2019 FoE's annual 'Basecamp' gathering will be replaced by a series of meetings in every region of the country to scale up the movement for environmental justice. Groundswell 2019 will bring hundreds of us together in London (27 April), Darlington (18 May), Manchester (1 June), Birmingham (8 June), Bristol (15 June) and Cambridge (29 June). If you'd like to go to any of these get in touch – some places may still be available for local group representatives.

Verges for Pollinators:

Econet has started a research project to plant up some of Reading's roadside verges with plants for pollinators. They are looking for volunteers to identify a suitable patch near their house/work that they would help to plant up and then monitor during the year. The monitoring is not time consuming, just tick boxes: has the grass been mown, are plants in flower, are there any insects on them?

Full information on the "grass verges project" is on the GREN resources section under reports and briefings category at <https://www.gren.org.uk/resources/infoabouttheprojectgren.docx>

Matt Rodda MP on Palm Oil and Transport:

Matt Rodda MP has written to the Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt MP, to ask for international action on Palm Oil. His letter can be seen on: <https://www.facebook.com/matt4readingeast/posts/26444076045617165>

He has also been speaking in Parliament about transport for towns. A video of what he said is here: <https://goo.gl/hsTx12> and the transcript can be found here: <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/whall/?id=2019-02-19a.542.2>

Reading Community Energy Share Offer:

They have now launched their latest share offer, for solar PV installations on 8-10 additional buildings in/around Reading. They are keen to attract local investors as far as is possible to help give the scheme a sense of local ownership. In early March they need around £280k more to carry out their plans, and hope to raise the money by 29th March. The details are here - <https://readingenergy.coop/share-offer-2019/>

Reading Buses take over Wokingham company:

Buses in north Wokingham will now be run by Reading. <https://www.wokinghampaper.co.uk/reading-buses-buys-out-courtney-buses/>

FoE Reports and Briefings:

National FoE are setting up a new 'Policy and Insight website' for reports and briefings. Not yet fully populated but looks promising. <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/>

Includes three new briefings on reducing the impact of urban transport on climate change – 'more than electric cars' <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/publications/more-electric-cars> ; 'planning for less car use' <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/publications/planning-less-car-use> ; 'transforming public transport' (including the prospect of free bus travel for under-30s) <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/publications/transforming-public-transport>

Useful Links and General Information:

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 - <https://readingcan.org.uk/>

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

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

Save Our Ancient Riverside - <https://saveourancientriverside.co.uk/>

Reading FoE Officers

At our AGM on April 11th 2018 Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were re-elected to the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively. A draft Privacy Policy was approved.

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 (currently 6 per year) and information about important events and actions.