

# Reading Friends of the Earth



## Newsletter Mar - Apr 2020

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. Twitter @ReadingFOE

### 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 2020**. Most meetings include discussion of general topics – some have a particular focus or guest speakers. Meetings are open to all.

**Monday March 16<sup>th</sup>** - 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting** – changed from 11<sup>th</sup> because of clashes with other meetings – see below. Should hear reports from those meetings and make plans for response to RBC Local Transport Plan proposals, interaction with Transport for the South East, and for stalls in April (dates below).

**Wednesday April 8<sup>th</sup>** - 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting** – including short AGM. Topics by e-mail later – hope to be discussing response to RBC consultations on: Transport Plan, Reading Climate Action Network revision of Strategy, Biodiversity Action Plan and Tree Strategy.

### Other Activities with Reading FoE:

**Sunday April 5<sup>th</sup>** – 11:00 – 14:00 – joint information stall with XR Bracknell at '**Bracknell Spring Event**' at Jock's Lane Recreation Ground (RG12 2BH – about 1 mile from Bracknell railway station.) Help needed.

**Saturday April 18<sup>th</sup>** – 10:00 – 15:00 – **Beanpole Day** at Caversham Court - information stall – aiming to address climate change, flooding, and proposed Environment Bill. Help needed.

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

**Wednesday March 11<sup>th</sup>** – 19:30 at RISC - **The Climate Emergency - Financing Change** – GJN meeting - Economist John Christensen will discuss various financing mechanisms, and how fair taxation can contribute to tackling global warming. <https://www.facebook.com/events/2528077200781716/>

**Wednesday March 11<sup>th</sup>** – **Smart Cities: Infrastructure for the Future** – Engineering Institutions 'Great Debate' - 4 talks plus questions on 'Smart Cities' 6:00 for 7:00 at University of Reading Henley Business School. <https://www.icheme.org/greatdebate2020-tvmg>

**Thursday April 23<sup>rd</sup>** - 20:00 Maiden Place, Earley – **Wokingham Climate Action Plan** – presentation to Earley Environmental Group by Cllr. Gregor Murray, WBC. <http://www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk/>.

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

**Reading Bicycle Kitchen** – regular sessions at the Queens Arms – see <http://www.readingbicyclekitchen.org/>

**Green Drinks at RISC** – usually on the first Tuesday of every month.. <http://www.greendrinks.org/berkshire/reading>



### XR's Red Rebel Brigade at Reading Borough Council



### **Alok Sharma MP (Reading West) to lead on COP26:**

As well as a ministerial role as Business Secretary Alok Sharma has been appointed President of COP26 (the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Glasgow in November) which must make him one of the most important (and busiest) people in the world. In a recent speech he said he wanted to 'leave a legacy which stands the test of time, and makes life better for future generations' and addressed the wide-ranging issues and actions that will be required. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/cop26-president-alok-sharma-at-launch-of-cop26-private-finance-agenda>

### **Climate Questions to Reading Borough Council - February 25<sup>th</sup>:**

The full Council meeting to approve their Budget had a strong focus on the Climate Emergency which had been declared a year before. XR's 'Red Rebel Brigade' made their silent static protest - the central veiled 'Red Rebel' represented the past year and the other ten represented the ten years to 2030 - RBC's target date for 'net zero'.

RBC had released a record of actions on climate emergency showing useful progress with significant capital spend on the transport sector – Green Park Station and the South Reading MRT – and conversion of the Council's Bennet Road site heating from gas to electric air-source heat pumps: <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s10430/item12-ClimateEmergencyAction.pdf>

Video of meeting is at [https://channel.royalcast.com/readingboroughcouncil/#!/readingboroughcouncil/20200225\\_1](https://channel.royalcast.com/readingboroughcouncil/#!/readingboroughcouncil/20200225_1)

The record of **Public Q&A** is at <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s10531/Item%2005.pdf> . After a number of questions on recycling Question #6 (*at 29 minutes in the video*) from XR's Stuart Kinton had the most revealing answer – RBC's Chief Executive has apparently not yet contacted the government to press for action and support despite having been instructed to do so by the initial RBC Climate Emergency Declaration.

Reading FoE's Question #18 pointed to the difference between the £34 million over 2 years in the Climate Emergency budget and the Council's estimate of £3.5 billion to achieve net zero by 2030. Cllr. Page referred to the intention to seek central government funding, and to await publication of the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy.

In the **Budget Debate** Council Leader Brock (Labour) spoke about spend on transport – especially a new rail station.

Cllr. White (Green) criticised underspend of the previous budget and no ambition to replace lost members of the Sustainability Team and proposed a target of 4,000 homes to have up-graded insulation every year (same as FoE target) to address climate and fuel poverty. At about *1 hour 30 minutes* he proposed an amendment to access Government funding (LA Flex scheme) to insulate properties. Cllr. Brock said RBC would look at this suggestion but would not immediately change the Budget. It had Lib-Dem support but was defeated by Labour and Conservatives.

At about *1 hour 50 minutes* Cllr. Duveen (Lib-Dem) proposed an amendment to spend more on electric vehicle charging points, tree planting, and enforcement of parking restrictions. This was defeated.

Around *2 hours 24 minutes* Cllr. Stevens for the Conservatives opposed road user charging and spending money to improve low carbon active travel. Around *2 hours 39 minutes* Cllr. Page responded that the details of proposals would be in the draft Transport Strategy going to SEPT on March 16<sup>th</sup> which will set out very radical proposals.

Cllr. Eden welcomed the opportunity to lobby Alok Sharma MP in his role as chair of COP26.

### **Reading Recycling Survey:**

RBC have launched a survey for Borough residents to comment on recycling. This closes on 8<sup>th</sup> March so please complete it soon! <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/css/waste-recycling-survey/>

### **Wokingham Climate Action:**

Wokingham Borough has announced a 3-year plan with commitment to spend £50 million – including £18 million on renewable energy, but also £13 million on future road building/enhancement.

Termed an **initial** plan to be reviewed and enhanced every July. Good on setting out status quo and defining positive actions but does not define expected carbon reduction outcomes over 3 years, let alone 10 years, so yes, revision and improvement will be needed.

Executive Member for Climate Emergency Councillor Gregor Murray is presenting this plan to Earley Environmental Group on 23<sup>rd</sup> April (see listings above) so a chance to find out how a neighbouring Council has approached the issue.

It says key features are:

- Review and revise our transport network to enable more shared, electric or human-powered journeys
- Create a 'Green Bank' to help residents and businesses pay for the cost of environmentally positive improvements to homes, offices and equipment
- Construct solar farms for the generation of clean energy for our community
- Revise our Local Plan to require carbon-neutral construction and environmentally beneficial infrastructure
- Plant 250,000 new trees over the next five years
- Launch a sustainable schools programme backed up with clean, onsite energy generation

- Send zero waste to landfill, with refuse either recycled or incinerated for carbon contained heat and energy generation
- Invest heavily into educational programmes for residents, businesses, schools, charities and other organisations to help them calculate and reduce their own carbon footprints

Plan document includes interesting comparisons of CO2 emissions with other Berkshire authorities including Reading – there are differences resulting from differences in area and activity between the authorities.  
<https://wokingham.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s38824/Enc.%20%20for%20Declare%20a%20Climate%20Emergency.pdf> .

### **Heathrow – government acted ‘unlawfully’ – what now?:**

Wonderful news that the ‘Airports National Policy Statement’ has been found to be ‘unlawful’ – it had failed to take into account the ‘Paris Agreement’, signed by UK, to reduce CO2 emissions to zero by 2050. Reading FoE and six other local FoE groups had objected to the draft NPS in 2017.

The judgement emphasised that the ‘unlawful’ finding was on very narrow legal grounds, saying “we have concluded that in one important respect the ANPS was not produced as the law requires, and indeed as Parliament has expressly provided”. ... but ... “We have not decided, and could not decide, that there will be no third runway at Heathrow. We have not found that a national policy statement supporting this project is necessarily incompatible with the United Kingdom’s commitment to reducing carbon emissions and mitigating climate change under the Paris Agreement, or with any other policy the Government may adopt or international obligation it may undertake.”

For a more detailed discussion by a member of FoE’s legal team see <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/insight/ruling-against-heathrow-expansion-impacts-and-significance> - which argues that the government should also now review other national policy statements, such as on energy.

Full judgement is at <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2020/214.html> - ‘Plan B Earth’ and FoE were both ‘Claimants’. Plan B won one point (paragraphs 222 to 233) and FoE won 3 (paragraphs 234 to 238, 242 to 247, and 248 to 261). Summary judgement is at <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Heathrow-summary-of-judgments-26-February-2020-online-version.pdf>

### **Now Stop HS2?**

Following the Heathrow verdict Chris Packham is stepping up the campaign against HS2.  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-51722251> with a fundraising campaign for legal challenge.  
<https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/rethinkhs2/>

### **Wokingham Plan Revision – Grazeley and ERMRT:**

Local Authorities have to have up-to-date Plans to accommodate the level of housing and other development the government agrees is appropriate. Wokingham has an active consultation on revision of its Plan at <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-policy/planning-policy-information/draft-local-plan-consultation/> which closes on 20<sup>th</sup> March. It proposes building 769 new homes per year up to 2036 when the government target is 804.

Particularly controversially it proposes a 15,000-home ‘new garden town at Grazeley’ south of Reading to take some of the housing allocation of West Berkshire, Wokingham and Reading. This would be on a greenfield site some distance from Reading which would grow slowly over and beyond the plan period. A proposal for a much smaller settlement in this location was defeated by CPRE and others, including Berkshire FoE, in 1999. This larger development is planned to incorporate more schools and employment but proximity to J11 of the M4 and Reading would make car use attractive even if the proposed railway station is built.

The draft Plan also retains the designation of the Thames riverbank as a Protected Strategic Transport Area.

Consultation event displays are at <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allId=511397>  
 Opposition is being discussed at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/SOSSaveOurVillages/>

### **Land Use and Climate Change:**

Government must confront the rapid changes that are now needed, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) says in its first ever in-depth advice on UK agricultural policies. <https://bit.ly/2upiwuA>

### **Flood Protection in Reading:**

John and Joanna have attended meetings on flooding and drought. The controversial proposed Caversham defences are not imminent but experts predict a 35% increase in peak river flows in future.

### **Matt Rodda MP (Reading East) on Transport Emissions:**

On 5<sup>th</sup> February Parliament debated curbing transport emissions by 2030. Sir John Redwood called for congestion busting. Matt Rodda closed the debate (before the Minister responded) making some good points.  
<https://www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2020-02-05b.377.0#g377.2>

### **Reading Transport Strategy – consultation:**

First sight of new document – comments please <http://news.reading.gov.uk/new-transport-strategy-2036/>

## **Useful Links and General Information:**

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

– Policy and Insight <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/>

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

Reading Climate Action Network - <https://readingcan.org.uk>

Extinction Rebellion, Reading: <https://www.facebook.com/xrReading/>

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/>

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 10<sup>th</sup> 2019 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](mailto: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.

## **Reading FoE Subscriptions – Subscribe NOW for 2019/20**

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.