

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter March-April 2022

For more info: www.readingfoe.org.uk ... or Twitter @ReadingFOE ...
or Facebook [Reading Friends of the Earth | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ReadingFriendsOfTheEarth/) ...
or email info@readingfoe.org.uk ... or 'phone 07503626167.



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 2022 (see below). Access from London Street is via passage to the right of the shop-front. Most meetings discuss plans and general topics, some have a particular focus or guest speakers. Meetings are open to all. We continue to monitor Covid risks, regulations, and guidance, and may cancel (perhaps to go on-line) at short notice. If in doubt check our website www.readingfoe.org.uk or phone or e-mail for confirmation (contacts above).

Wednesday March 9th: 7:30 pm. **Green Park: Reading's New Station / For People & Environment**
Main hall at RISC and on-line. See below. Will be followed by a brief monthly group meeting.

Wednesday April 13th: This will include our annual brief AGM to review the past and preview the future and elect our co-ordinator and treasurer. Someone to take on the role of treasurer would be very welcome. Current plan is 'hybrid' meeting in Room 1 at RISC and on Zoom - 8:00 pm. If you haven't received a Zoom link by that week request it.

Campaign against Cumbrian Coal Mine:

Green Park Station:



Other Activities with Reading FoE:

Friday March 11th: Nationally-co-ordinated action to **Stop the Cumbria Coal Mine**. Photo-opportunity to hand in letter(s?) of objection at the West Reading office of Alok Sharma MP, President of COP26 (who probably won't be there). Gather from 12:00 for photos at about 13:00. At the end of Upton Road, RG30 4EA, in West Reading. See below.

Saturday March 12th: 13:30 – 14:30. **Air Quality 'drop-in' in Broad Street Mall**. Opportunity to talk to passers-by about NO₂ and PM_{2.5} from traffic and pollution from proposed incinerator at Burghfield. See **CCQoL** below.

Saturday March 26th: 10:30 – 11:30. **Climate Change 'drop-in' in Broad Street Mall**. Opportunity to talk to passers-by about low-carbon heating of homes. See **CCQoL** below.

Saturday April 23rd – Reading FoE stall at **Beanpole Day** – Caversham Court. Can cover lots of issues from climate to wildlife. Please offer to help to cover the day – open 10:00 to 15:00 but help also needed to set up and clear down.

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

Wednesday March 16th: 7:30 at RISC and on Zoom. **'Green Energy – costing the earth?'** Talk and discussion for Global Justice Now. [Green Energy – costing the earth? | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/GreenEnergyCostingTheEarth/)

Wednesday March 16th: 19:00 on-line: Great Debate' - **The Future for Residential Heating** – book here: [Great Debate 2022 - The Future for Residential Heating, online | Institution of Civil Engineers \(ice.org.uk\)](https://www.ice.org.uk/great-debate-2022-the-future-for-residential-heating)

Reading Cycle Campaign – has regular monthly meetings and other activities. <https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/>

Repair Cafe – usually third weekend of month - check on their website for times and locations <http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/projects/reading-repair-cafe/>

Reading Bicycle Kitchen – regular sessions at Unit C10, Weldale Street, RG1 7BX
– see [Reading Bicycle Kitchen](#)

Green Drinks – usually on the first Tuesday of every month – not sure what is happening during Covid – see <http://www.greendrinks.org/Berkshire/Reading>

Green Park: Reading's New Station / For People & Environment

Reading's first new station for 115 years is planned to open in June 2022 so Chris has arranged a public meeting to review the expected benefits. Come to the in-person event at RISC or register for Zoom link via Eventbrite.

Speakers:

- **Edward Goose:** (Regional Growth Manager (East) | Great Western Railway) on the railway implications
- **Cllr. Tony Page:** speaking for RBC on the local transport, environment, and business benefits.

Topics include:

- Benefits to Reading: environmental, economic, traffic congestion ...
- What new public transport or facilities for travel to/from the station will be created?
- Will it be useful for access to the stadium for football and events – for people from Reading and elsewhere?
- Tackling climate-changing emissions
- Faster journey times

We hope to also explore the benefits of potential future improvements to the Basingstoke Line and the Station:

- Electrification?
- Additional track(s) or passing places?
- Digital Railway?
- Freight exchange (? south of M4)

Facebook event: [Green Park: Reading's New Station / For People & Environment | Facebook](#) Eventbrite link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/green-park-readings-new-station-good-for-people-and-environment-tickets-273484558677>

Stop the Cumbria Coal Mine – in West Reading on 11th March:

The proposal to open a new mine near Whitehaven in Cumbria for 'coking coal' to make steel has been through a public inquiry and a decision by Michael Gove is expected fairly soon. This decision will reflect on how committed the UK is to acting on the climate crisis. Gather from 12:00 for photos at about 13:00.

FoE has provided a template letter <https://campaigning.friendsoftheearth.uk/download/template-mp-letter-stop-plans-new-coal-mine-0> for us to hand in to MPs and we hope to generate media interest with pictures of activists with banners and placards outside Alok Sharma's office. Unfortunately it is unlikely he will be there to meet us in person (he has said he could not meet our representative on that day) so this will probably just be a quick photo-call. We will have some banners/placards but please make your own if you feel inspired!

See [How to campaign against the Cumbrian coal mine | Resources \(friendsoftheearth.uk\)](#) and to answer technical questions [Coal-mine-emissions-&-steel-decarb-news-by-HA.pdf \(plus.com\)](#)

Community Consultation for Quality of Life (CCQoL):

This is a research project to investigate how to gather people's ideas about Quality of Life in their community – being run by UoR and other academic establishments. For general information see their Facebook Page [Ccqol Yourplaceourplace Reading | Facebook](#) ,

'YourPlaceOurPlace' is one of the first pilots of the CCQoL project. It involves community consultation through activities at an 'Urban Room' using a digital mapping tool. It is in a former shop in the north-west end of Broad Street Mall (near Poundland) where for Tuesday to Saturday during March they will be providing information to the local community about key issues such as the Reading Town Centre Strategy and offering a place for discussion to encourage awareness and connection between various communities.

It is equipped with everything from maps and post-it notes (20th century!) to tablets and computers. People can also contribute ideas on-line on their website <https://ccqolreading.commonplace.is/> so we should all join in.

Events in the Urban Room focussing on different topics are listed at [YOUR PLACE OUR PLACE Tickets, Multiple Dates | Eventbrite](#) – scroll down to find diaries for each week. No need to book for our ‘drop-in’ events which are on the dates and times shown above. Several people have said they can help on 12th but will need more on 26th.

Reading Golf Course – plans for development in Caversham approved:

On 2nd March, despite about 4,000 local objections, Reading Planning Committee approved the latest application for development on this site for 223 new homes (reduction of 34 from previous) when the approved Local Plan allowed for 90 to 130 homes.

Keep Emmer Green is to apply for the decision to be ‘called in’ by the Secretary of State. See <https://keepemmergreen.com/> and <https://www.facebook.com/pg/KeepEmmerGreen/posts/> and RFoE previous comments linked from <http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/>

Reading FoE had submitted objections/comments on the latest proposal on grounds of air quality, congestion, and climate change. While the development will certainly be damaging on all these aspects it was hard to find ‘killer’ arguments under planning law because the application had met or exceeded the formally-required standards on carbon emissions per dwelling. Arguably it had failed to provide evidence and analysis to comply with Reading’s Supplementary Planning Document on Sustainable Development.

The developer’s estimate that emissions during construction amount to 4,451 tonnes CO₂e may well be an underestimate and is:

- About 75 times the estimate of the development’s annual operational emissions after mitigation measures and about 0.8% of Reading Borough’s total annual emissions - so extremely important in context of 2030 decarbonisation targets.
- Not remotely significantly mitigated by proposed tree-planting or other measures in context of 2030 decarbonisation targets.

Operational phase emissions: While the proposals appear to comply with Council planning requirements for ‘zero carbon homes’ (with an offset payment to RBC) the development could have done more to further reduce climate-changing emissions:

- It is good the developers plan to fit solar PV but the panels are largely an ‘offset’ because they only generate in daytime and mostly in summer, so will supply relatively little of the electricity used to heat the development.
- Building to PassivHaus standard for insulation would reduce emissions for heating by about 50 tonnes CO₂e per annum.
- Ground sourced heat pumps (as opposed to Air-sourced heat pumps) – with air conditioning and heat networks – would probably further reduce emissions for space and water heating.

Climate Change – IPCC Report and FoE campaign on ‘Net Zero’:

At the end of February the IPCC issued a major report on ‘Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability’. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres described the report as ***“an atlas of human suffering and a damning indictment of failed climate leadership”***, warning that nearly half of humanity is in the climate danger zone and many ecosystems are at the point of no return.

Responding to the IPCC report, Alok Sharma, the COP26 conference president, warned: “We will witness considerable changes in our lifetime and, without ambitious action, millions across the planet could no longer have anywhere to call home.”

A key point from the report is that ‘Net Zero’ by 2050 is not a sufficient target to prevent very serious consequences for humanity and the natural environment. See summary at [‘An atlas of human suffering’ - UN report issues stark warning on climate change | E&T Magazine \(theiet.org\)](#).

The IPCC summary for policymakers makes this point in “SPM.B.3 . . . Near-term actions that limit global warming to close to 1.5°C would substantially reduce projected losses and damages related to climate change in human systems and ecosystems, compared to higher warming levels, but cannot eliminate them all (very high confidence). . . .”
https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg2/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf

Similarly the response by Alok Sharma MP and others [Joint Statement from UK, Egypt and UNFCCC in response to IPCC Working Group 2 Report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) focusses not on ‘Net Zero’ but on keeping the global temperature rise below 1.5C. They accept that urgent action is needed saying “We must urgently accelerate our efforts to keep 1.5 in reach through revisiting and strengthening 2030 targets, delivering support, investment and employment opportunities.”

Friends of the Earth is taking the government to court over its Net Zero Strategy. They say “It’s not clear whether the government has factored in the emissions that will result from its own policies, like its £27 billion road-building programme or plans for airport expansions. And it gets worse. Further concerns include:

- No promise to end the use of fossil fuels.
- A lack of investment to fund measures.
- Overreliance on technology that hasn't even been rolled out yet, such as “sustainable” aviation fuel, carbon capture and storage, and magic animal feed that stops cows and sheep belching methane (a powerful greenhouse gas).

But the major issue is that the strategy doesn’t contain any assessment of the impact of the proposed policies – it’s all theoretical.” Read all about it: <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/whats-net-zero-strategy-and-why-are-we-trying-fix-it>

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/>

Reading FoE Officers

Our 2021 AGM on April 14th elected Enrico Petrucco and John Booth to continue in the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively.

Reading FoE e-mail communications

If you would like to be on our mailing list and receive and join in our day-to-day communications please send an email to info@readingfoe.org.uk to request our GDPR Consent form. We have separate lists for people who only want to receive our newsletter (currently 6 per year) and information about important events and actions, and for people who want to be more involved and communicate directly with other active supporters.

Reading FoE Subscriptions – Subscribe NOW for 2023/23

A donation of £8 annually would be welcome from members but is not required. We’re much happier to have an extra pair of hands doing the important stuff.

To join or renew, just fill in the slip below and send it off with or without 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.