

Reading Friends of the Earth



Newsletter March – April 2023

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 meet on the **second Wednesday of each month** in Room 1 upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 7:30 p.m. Access from London Street is via passage to the right of the shop-front. Most meetings will be 'hybrid' using Zoom. Please request a Zoom link if you have not received one. Most meetings discuss plans and general topics - some have a particular focus or guest speakers. Meetings are open to all. Meetings may cancel at short notice due to Covid or availability of group officers - if in doubt check our website www.readingfoe.org.uk on the day or phone or e-mail for confirmation (contacts above).

Wednesday March 8th: 7:30 pm. Topics to include:

- Taking forward FoE's 'United for Warm Homes' campaign in Reading
- Planning Reading FoE summer activities
- Reviewing Reading FoE organisation and communications

Wednesday April 12th: 7:30 pm. General meeting to include brief AGM to review the year and finances, to look to the future, and to elect officers. Other topics to be arranged. Check for updates on www.readingfoe.org.uk

XR campaign against Sewage in Rivers

28th January on the Thames – for more see

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/573633633200902/>



Area of Reading Area Rail Study

See notes on page 3 below



Other Future Activities with national and/or Reading FoE:

Tuesday March 14th: 19:00 – 20:15 – **FoE South East Monthly Meet-up** on Zoom talking about United for Warm Homes, 'Planet over Profit' – a new campaign on deforestation in UK supply chains, and working towards national elections. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/south-east-meet-up-march-2023-registration-541131828867>

Monday 27th March: 18:30 National FoE webinar "**Overcoming barriers to council climate action**". Councillor Brock recently celebrated fourth anniversary of Reading's 'Climate Emergency' in a piece in The Chronicle, but there must be room for improvement. Find out how to overcome barriers stopping councils adopting and implementing an ambitious Climate Action Plan. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/climate-action-plan-campaign-overcoming-barriers-to-council-action-registration-548892079987>

Saturday April 22nd: 10:00 to 15:00 – **Reading FoE at Beanpole Day** – Caversham Court Gardens. Opportunity to have a Reading FoE stall to meet people at this annual Econet event "Promoting local woodland products and wildlife friendly gardening." **Please advise if you can help** – so we can commit to taking a stall to address some wider issues.

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

Fairtrade Fortnight events in Reading 21st February to 29th March. <https://www.risc.org.uk/images/events/ff-2023.pdf>

15th March: 'Great Debate' at UoR on '**Life Without Plastics**' – 21:00 to 23:00 hybrid event - run by engineering institutions <https://events.theiet.org/events/the-great-debate-2023-life-without-plastics-hybrid-event/>.

25th March: XR + Reading Quakers – ‘**Earth Hour**’ march from Forbury to film screening in The Minster followed by candle-lit march – 18:00 to 21:30 - <https://www.facebook.com/events/1331261500993263/>

29th March – ‘**A Just Transition and Environmental Justice**’ – RISC 19:30 – RISC and Global Justice Now – focus on impacts of mining with guest speakers. <https://risc.org.uk/events/risc/a-just-transition>

XR ‘**The Big One**’ at Parliament in London – Friday April 21st to Monday April 24th – mass gathering - see <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-big-one/> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/XRRdg>

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

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

Reading Bicycle Kitchen – regular sessions at Unit C10, Weldale Street, RG1 7BX
– see <https://www.readingbicyclekitchen.org/>

Green Drinks – usually on the first Tuesday of every month in the Castle Tap – see [Reading Green Drinks | Facebook](#)

Reading FoE summer plans:

We need to make plans and commitments for some summer activities. We usually take stalls to several open-air events to meet the public, run petitions etc. We can run other sorts of events as well. Now some organisers are requesting fees or donations so we need to be confident supporters want to take part before we commit.

- April 22nd – **Beanpole Day** – gazebo in Caversham Court Gardens – already booked – volunteers please.
- June 10th – **Waterfest** in Forbury and along Kennet – we have often taken a gazebo to this and last year presented small-scale workshops on heat pumps. This year the organisers are charging a pitch fee of £42 – 10% discount if booked by 14th April – or no fee if providing a free-of-charge activity such as a workshop or performance.
- June 10th to 21st – **Reading Climate Festival** <https://readingcan.org.uk/events/reading-climate-festival-2023/>. Can we propose some public event – either on-line or in person? Spring evenings maybe not so attractive for Zooming? RCAN are already chasing for commitments to include in their publicity but need to finalise by late April. First Saturday is Waterfest. There is some talk of a climate march around town in second weekend.
- June 25th – **East Reading Festival** – open air with Gazebo - already booked but request a £10 fee to choose location which is probably useful to avoid being too close to a band.
- August 5th – **Earley Green Fair** – reserved, expecting request to confirm soon - last year had a £5 fee.
- Summer excursion: we have often run an outdoor exploration at evening or weekend – leading to a pub ...

Please check your diaries and come to our March meeting or respond by e-mail beforehand. Additional suggestions welcome.

Analysis of Energy Performance Certificates:

“Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) tell you how energy efficient a building is”
<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/guide-to-energy-performance-certificates-epcs/>

Paolo has continued to work on apps to analyse and assess the EPC data for Reading and writes:

“An analysis on the EPC of Reading homes found that, despite most homes having some level of thermal insulation, less than 5% can be deemed as fully insulated (i.e. having walls insulation, double glazed windows, roof insulation and floor insulation).

“On the other hand, around 10% of Reading homes don't have any level of thermal insulation at all, causing discomfort and hardship for those living in those properties, especially at times of skyrocketing energy bills.

“Comparing the costs of home insulation with the savings on energy bills these measures will bring, the most effective actions to take are insulating roofs and cavity walls: those initial investments will be repaid, on average, within 2 years and 4 years, respectively.”

Reading for Warm Homes:

We ran a photo-call for the National Day of Action on 3rd December (see previous newsletter). Since then Enrico has made progress on developing handouts to give ideas to help people in fuel poverty. We discussed these at our February meeting and suggested some improvements.

FoE are now suggesting every group should to set up a local petition to their MPs calling for support with energy bills, a nationwide insulation programme, and a move to a renewable energy system. The idea is to collect signatures over

spring and summer to 'get political' <https://unitedforwarmhomes.uk/how-guides/get-political> in the run-up to the next national parliamentary elections.

At our February group meeting we were not fully aware of these new plans and decided not to go ahead immediately, but now we can reconsider. It would give us something to take to the public and other groups over the summer. FoE have created a petition template and guide with all the information they say we need. <https://unitedforwarmhomes.uk/how-guides/how-create-petition-and-grow-your-mailing-list> and there is much more on the national website at <https://unitedforwarmhomes.uk/>.

The next national campaign monthly meeting is on Zoom on 21 March 6 – 7pm and will include a mini-skills session on how to 'pitch' the petition and ask people to sign it at events, in the street or on a stall. Register at [register to attend](#)

Highlights from latest National FoE News e-mail:

Bracknell Climate Action Group has at last persuaded their Council to declare a climate emergency in response to a petition. <https://www.facebook.com/BracknellClimateActionGroup/>

FoE's corporate justice campaign has a new name – **Planet over Profit**. From March they want groups to start pushing their MPs to support a new law on business, human rights and the environment. They kicked things off with a launch webinar – see the [campaign page](#) for more information.

For the May **Local Elections** FoE have put together a [host of resources](#), including guidance on meeting candidates, organising hustings and setting up an election petition.

FoE would like groups to run a local action on divestment on March 24th <https://www.divest.org.uk/divest-from-crisis/>

There's a petition against expanding an open-cast coal mine at Merthyr Tydfil at <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/don-t-expand-uk-s-biggest-opencast-coal-mine>

Reading Area Rail Study:

Network Rail have released a '[Reading area strategic study](#)' asking: "How can rail best support sustainable economic and housing growth in the Reading subregion?" Does not seem to question how much and what sort of growth should be envisaged.

A pity none of their strategic priorities in Table 2.1 mentioned addressing climate change and that reducing demand to travel didn't figure high – but it will be an interesting read and has some significant recommendations.

"Building more roads to prevent congestion is like a fat man loosening his belt to prevent obesity."

While not focusing on traffic reduction – to win on congestion, carbon and clean air - the Transport for the South East £45 billion 'Strategic Investment Plan' is likely to be approved by its Board on 13th March. The meeting will be streamed on YouTube at 13:00 <https://transportforthesoutheast.org.uk/about-us/meetings/partnership-board-9/>

Transport Action Network has commented: "The harsh reality is that it proposes building over 50 road schemes before 2030. These will drive up traffic and emissions. They will undermine the UK's ability to reduce carbon emission by 68% by 2030, its pledge to COP. It's yet another example of why restricting global warming to 1.5 degrees looks increasingly hopeless."

The Local Government Association views the government's 2022 traffic and congestion forecast with great concern. "Some journeys will always need to be done by car but our goal should be to shift journeys to other means, such as onto public transport, or off the roads entirely." Cites Reading Buses as a good example.

https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.16%20Congestion_report_v03.pdf

At Reading's Traffic Management Sub-Committee

<https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=170&MId=4960> Councillor Page comments that post-Covid there is now much less congestion on Reading's radial roads (Item 6). Another piece of good news is general approval of cycling through the station underpass but not clear when this will happen (Item 7). Green Park Station opening is closer but date is not yet scheduled (Item 5).

RBC Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee:

The next meeting is 23rd March so agenda and documents – always interesting – are not yet public.

<https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=4959> .

John had requested the meeting make time for a presentation from Kensa <https://www.kensaheatpumps.com/> on Ground Source Heat but was told: "The agenda for March SEPT is pretty full and we already have a presentation on our exciting plans for bus services in the light of the £26 m funding we have secured. However, this would certainly be a topic of interest for a future SEPT in the 2023/24 municipal year, maybe in conjunction with other climate change matters."

There is still time to arrange to ask a Question at the meeting if we can decide on an important issue.

Caversham Golf Course:

Having got planning permission for 223 new homes with Air Source Heat Pumps the Golf Club have sold to housebuilders Vistry Thames Valley who now say they want to switch most of the homes to gas boilers because the local electricity supplier SSE says it cannot supply enough electricity to the site.

Vistry say: "The energy statement accompanying the outline planning application detailed the inclusion of air source heat pump to all dwellings, together with solar photovoltaic systems. However, following discussions with the local electricity network operator, it has become apparent that there is insufficient network capacity to deliver all homes with heat pump systems, and these can only be utilised to a maximum of 81 of the 233 dwellings. The amended AES Energy Statement concludes that the remainder of the dwellings will therefore utilise high efficiency gas boilers, supplemented by solar PV systems sufficient to deliver a least the required 35% carbon reductions."

We are trying to find more detail on SSE's position and hope to raise a formal Objection to the change in plans.

To view the changes Vistry want to make, type reference 221312 into the council's planning portal (if it works) <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-applications/search-planning-applications/> .

See the [Energy and Sustainability Statement](#) . Our earlier objections are on www.readingfoe.org.uk

Useful Links and General Information:

Recent links for Reading FoE stalls and campaigns: www.readingfoe.org.uk/links

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/>. Also [Greater Reading Environment Network | Facebook](#)

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 etc.

Our 2022 AGM on April 13th elected Enrico Petrucco and John Booth to continue in the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively. A new Constitution for the group was adopted.

Reading FoE e-mail communications

If you would like to become a supporter 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:

A subscription/donation would be welcome from supporters 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 address 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 registration 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 (if any) payable to Reading Friends of the Earth, and return to the Reading FoE Treasurer, c/o 27 Instow Road, Earley, Reading RG6 5QH. Alternatively request our bank account details.