

Reading Friends of the Earth



Newsletter March – April 2024

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.

* Note: Our website <http://www.readingfoe.org.uk> is not secure and some browsers will not open it. We are in process of shifting to <https://www.readingfoe.co.uk> which already has some content.

General Meetings: Reading FoE usually meet on the **second Wednesday of each month** either in person or on Zoom. Often in Room 1 upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 7:30 p.m. Access to RISC from London Street is via a passage to the right of the shop-front. Most meetings will be 'hybrid' - 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.

Wednesday March 13th: 7:30 pm. Will meet in person at RISC and on Zoom. Hope to welcome new supporters and hold a workshop on campaign issues and actions, and look at our agenda for the next calendar year.

Warm homes and global heating will surely continue to be a priority but FoE work on a wide range of environmental issues and local groups can decide what local or national issues to focus on and choose our own activities.

Wednesday April 10th: 7:30 pm. Will be on Zoom – hope also to be 'hybrid' – venue to be decided. Will include a brief AGM. Other topics to include plans for future meetings and summer activities.

Fifty years on...!??

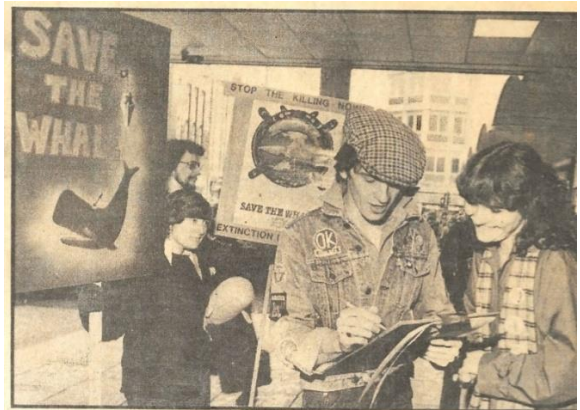
Legend has it that Reading FoE first met in 1974. Entering our second half-century we can celebrate a long history of local activities and will document some in our newsletters.

Our January newsletter featured a campaign for cycling from 1975. In 1979 Reading FoE were petitioning (with others) for government action to stop whaling – and were eventually successful.

“After growing pressure from member nations, in 1979, the International Whaling Commission established the Indian Ocean Whale Sanctuary as a practical conservation measure. Three years later, in 1982, the IWC adopted a moratorium on commercial whaling, which took effect in 1986”.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-whaling>

1979 - Saving the Whale in the Butts Centre!!



■ FLASHBACK to the height of "whale fever" in 1979 ... local FoE members campaign at Reading's Butts Centre.

Future Activities and Opportunities with Reading FoE, FoE SE region, and national FoE:

March – date to be determined – ‘Left out in the cold’ - MP Action.

Friends of the Earth recently worked with the Institute of Health Equity to publish “[Left out in the cold: the hidden health costs of Britain's cold homes](#)”. This is a new report into the hidden health costs of Britain's cold homes, which found that 9.6 million UK households are living in heat-leaking, badly- insulated homes and have incomes below the minimum required for an acceptable standard of living.

Suggestion is to take a photo outside our MP's office (or elsewhere recognisable) with Warm Homes banners and props and hand in a printed summary of the report to the MP's office, along with a letter requesting to meet. Then press release and use in social media. Will discuss details at our March meeting. FoE guidance here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/19RTCE_wd_wpNd3Yyti6B8S71Lyvw3GOBFGPjjschSxY/edit

Wednesday 20th March – 18:00 - **Get ready for the General Election** - National FoE webinar on campaigning for environmental justice <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/get-ready-for-the-general-election-registration-823624933347>

Monday 25th March – ‘**Under Two K**’ is a business promoting living under two kWh a day. We have been invited to give a talk to this new solar energy company in Earley. To be confirmed but probably Paolo will talk about opportunities to save energy as revealed by analysis of Energy Performance Certificates.

Tuesday 26th March – 19:00 - **An introduction to the legal right to a healthy environment** – National FoE webinar on campaigning for a healthy environment <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/an-introduction-to-the-legal-right-to-a-healthy-environment-registration-810245254367>

Saturday 20th April – **Beanpole Day** at Caversham Court – 10:00 to 15:00. Graham proposes our stall will feature **Compost** – as well as the usual mix of issues. Please let us know if you can spare some time to come and meet the public – and other stall-holders – at this popular event.

Thursday 25th April – 6 pm - National FoE webinar. **United for Warm Homes: Getting ready for the general election** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/united-for-warm-homes-getting-ready-for-the-general-election-registration-852090765417>

Saturday 8th June – **Reading Waterfest** – Forbury Gardens and riverbank. We are looking to have a stall and present workshops on Heat Pumps, and perhaps also on river pollution if River Action want to join us.

8th to 21st June - **Reading Climate Festival** run by Reading Climate Action Network – we would like to present one or more in-person or on-line events. Please tell us what issues we should be communicating on and how you can help.

Sunday 23rd June – **East Reading Festival** – Palmer Park. Another opportunity to run a stall to get ideas over to the public and visiting media and politicians.

Updates from January - February:

River Action – sampling for pollution in the Thames

At our January meeting Chloe Peck (communities coordinator for the charity River Action) gave a Zoom presentation which covered the work of River Action <https://riveractionuk.com/>.

“All of England’s 200,000km network of rivers are chemically polluted and only 14% with good ecological status”

River Action are critical of Environment Agency inaction – problems are not simply sewage but also other aspects of land-use such as run-off from agriculture. Potential direct impacts on human health as well as on aquatic wildlife.

River Action are going to be doing some work on testing the Thames alongside the GB rowing team in Caversham. Chloe recently emailed that Dave Wallace, of the Henley and Marlow River Action Group, wants to conduct water quality tests in the Thames, right outside Thames HQ, and would like to get a team together to do this.

Please let us know if you are interested in helping with this so we can keep you updated on how to get involved.

Reading Air Quality Action Plan Consultation:

We submitted a group response to this consultation which closed on 17th January. (Consultation documents are at <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/dens/air-quality-action-plan-2024-2029-consultation/>)

“We welcome the direction of the AQAP but would like to see quantitative estimates of the actions proposed and their expected impact on the levels of pollution and on the health of the people of Reading

“WHO objectives are now far tighter than current UK legal requirements and UK 2040 targets are still lagging behind the WHO.

“The key actions that we would like to emphasise are:

- Much improved monitoring of PM2.5, perhaps by ‘citizen science’,
- More detailed analysis of the impact of improving air quality on long-term and short-term health – for everyone and particularly for vulnerable individuals in Reading – with NO2 and PM2.5 considered separately.
- Using this information to make the case for better transport – integrating the arguments on clean air, climate change and congestion.”

We forwarded our response to the members of the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport committee and received positive acknowledgements from Councillors Ennis, Page and McElroy.

Reading Plan ‘Partial Update’ Consultation

We submitted a group response to this consultation which closed on 31st January. (Consultation documents are at <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/dens/local-plan-consultation/>)

The Local Plan sets out the planning policies and proposals for Reading up to 2036 – including housing numbers, development locations, and sustainability requirements - it is the main consideration when deciding planning applications. ‘Partial Update’ will extend the Plan to 2041 and address changing housing requirements from the government and other considerations including sustainability objectives. Consultation was on Scope and Content for an update to the plan, not on detailed proposals.

Our response:

- Welcomed inclusion of ‘embodied carbon’ and limits on emissions in use in commercial development control but called for more pressure on reducing energy demand, electrifying heat, and decentralised energy.
- Welcomed proposals on flooding but called for more attention to managing overheating and water conservation.
- Called for improvements to policies on air quality and pollution and water resources.
- Called for higher ‘Biodiversity Net Gain’ target
- Housing numbers should include demographic and economic forecasts leading to numbers of different types of housing to be aimed for. Housing numbers are inflated by a government-mandated 35% ‘large urban area uplift’ which is only reasonable if local transport, jobs, and amenity problems can actually be solved.
- Housing standards should address embodied carbon, electricity supply requirements, and water supply requirements.
- Called for policy on Parking Standards to be revised to discourage car ownership; and to provide adequate secure parking/storage space for bicycles, e-scooters etc.

“Reading for Warm Homes” - petition to Reading MPs – sign now!

Including ‘on-paper’ signatures we now have about 150. National target date for presentation to MPs was 18th November but we can continue for the moment. We need to decide when to arrange to present it to MPs and when to stop collecting signatures. There may be an opportunity to re-use the petition signatures in the run-up to the expected election in the new constituencies.

Sign petition here: <https://tinyurl.com/5n7tu5tt> Please sign if you are in either Reading constituency (Alok Sharma in Reading West or Matt Rodda in Reading East) or in the new ‘Earley and Woodley’ constituency – we can sort by postcode later.

Petition calls for:

Urgent support for people dealing with sky-high energy bills.

A new emergency programme to insulate our heat-leaking homes

An energy system powered by cheap, green renewables.

FoE ‘United for Warm Homes’ campaign is now moving towards getting MPs and candidates to ‘sign the pledge’ before the general election – as in the ‘Left out in the cold’ photocall proposed for March (see above).

<https://unitedforwarmhomes.uk/sign-united-warm-homes-pledge>

Waingel’s Cops School. We are working with a pupil at this Woodley school to take up her offer of help with our campaigns. Current proposed project is to design a poster for the Warm Homes campaign.

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

27th March – Global Justice Reading - **Let's clear the way for a Fossil-Free Future** - 7:30 pm at RISC “A global exit plan from coal, oil and gas, which would end the fossil fuel era quickly and fairly, is gaining ground.” With local activists Margaret Cocks, Tony Goodchild and Mariana Swann.

https://www.facebook.com/events/779331853553445/?acontext=%7B%22event_action_history%22%3A%5B%7D

10th April - Local Nature Recovery Strategy - Community Engagement event – Bracknell – 5:30 to 8:30. Details later – see <https://rbwmtogether.rbwm.gov.uk/berkshire-local-nature-recovery-strategy>

15th April - Transition Town Reading film – ‘**Six Inches of Soil**’ - Biscuit Factory 6:00 pm.

<https://transitiontownreading.wordpress.com/2024/01/27/six-inches-of-soil-film-screening-at-the-reading-biscuit-factory-monday-april-15th-2024-6-pm/>

Kidical Mass Reading – “Making space for the next generation, one bike ride at a time!” - are holding a number of rides for children in the coming months - see www.kidicalmassreading.co.uk or on Twitter @KidicalMassRead

Reading Critical Mass cycle ride. ... Rides on the last Friday of the month. Leave at 19:30 from the Civic Offices in Bridge Street. Leisurely ride for about an hour and a half finishing at pub.

XR Reading hold meetings and events – see <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 – see <https://www.readingbicyclekitchen.org/>

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

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' <https://friendsoftheearth.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 FoE Officers etc.

Our 2023 AGM on April 13th 2023 elected Enrico Petrucco to continue in the post of Co-ordinator and Paolo Turati to take over from John Booth as Treasurer.

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. 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. To contribute please pay cash at a meeting or event or request our bank account details.