



**Friends of the Earth**

# Reading Friends of the Earth

## Newsletter May/June 2012

For more information see <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading>  
email [info@readingfoe.org.uk](mailto:info@readingfoe.org.uk) or 'phone 0118 9868260.

### Diary:

**General Meetings:** Reading FoE usually meets on the second Wednesday of each month upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 8:00 p.m. Most meetings include discussion of general topics – some have particular focus or guest speakers.

**May 9th:** – 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – will include a meeting of the **Berkshire FoE Network** which includes groups in Bracknell, Maidenhead and West Berkshire – a chance to compare notes with the neighbours and to identify any common points for action or Berkshire-wide issues.

**June 13th:** - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – topics later by e-mail but should include preparation for Waterfest.

### Other Activities and Meetings (not run by Reading FoE):

**May 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>** – **Public Exhibition on Redevelopment of Thames Tower** – not sure exactly where or when, but a chance to see what is proposed and perhaps to influence the outcome ... see text and link below

**Saturday June 16<sup>th</sup> - Waterfest** – Council-organised summer event – please volunteer to help on our stall for a few hours – we will probably be promoting the Clean British Energy Campaign (see below).

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### Reading Climate Change Strategy.

In January 2012 the Reading Climate Change Partnership (RCCP) began the process of developing a new Reading Climate Change Strategy to run from 2013 to 2020.

After the 'Reading Means Business on Climate Change' meeting in January the workshop outputs were converted into themes for further discussion. The current phase is discussion of themes in on-line consultation forums – please join in at <http://www.rgnb.org.uk/>. 'Theme leads' are to complete drafts of strategy chapters by 11<sup>th</sup> June 2011. Activity then moves on from strategy to 'Action Plans' – all to be adopted by RCCP by the end of the year.

The RCCP is a sub group of the [Reading Local Strategic Partnership](#) which will help to develop and deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Reading Climate Change Strategy.

Reading Borough Council has a [Climate Change Strategy](#) for the period 2008-2013. The new document will be community-generated but is also intended to be adopted by the Council for the period from 2013.

### Bee Cause:

FoE's new national campaign to reverse the decline of bees in Britain has been launched with the distribution of 10,000 packets of wildflower seeds. Please sign the petition at [www.foe.co.uk/bees](http://www.foe.co.uk/bees) calling for a National Bee Action Plan to ensure that the way we farm our food and plan our towns and cities gets bees back on track.

Download the FoE booklet "20 things you need to know about bees" – as it says "They may be tiny but bees are essential to a healthy environment and healthy economy." <http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/factsheets/bees.pdf>.

Science Daily <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/03/120329141912.htm> reports two new studies showing adverse effects of commonly-used neonicotinoid agricultural pesticides on bumblebees.

Reading FoE has not yet signed up to take an active part in this campaign – if you would like to campaign with us in this area please get in touch.

### **“Final Demand” – and “Clean British Energy”:**

FoE's national energy campaign “Final Demand” called for the government to

- Hold an urgent public inquiry into the power and influence of the ‘Big Six’ energy companies
  - Not to axe support for clean British energy produced by communities, councils, business and householders.
- Nationally over 40,000 people signed the petition which was handed in on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2012. FoE say that it will stage an independent inquiry if the Government won't act on the ‘Big Six’.

The ‘Big Six’ are under increasing criticism over their high prices. The IPPR report ‘The True Cost of Energy’ <http://www.ippr.org/> calls for better regulation and more competition – the suppliers respond they are victims of the soaring price of gas. Both arguments support FoE's call for community-owned supplies and less reliance on fossil fuels. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2012/apr/30/big-six-energy-companies-regulation?newsfeed=true>

Clean British Energy is the next phase of the campaign – for us to pursue this summer -

- Sending e-mails to Energy Secretary Ed Davey and postcards to our MPs calling on them to steer the UK to a low-carbon renewable energy future and reduce the domination of the energy market by the ‘Big Six’.
- Persuading public and local businesses to switch electricity suppliers either to Good Energy or to Ecotricity
- Promoting local community energy schemes

[http://www.foe.co.uk/what\\_we\\_do/clean\\_british\\_energy\\_35564.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/what_we_do/clean_british_energy_35564.html)

The **Clean British Energy** branding of the campaign will allow us to award people and businesses ‘CBEs’ – jokingly to be confused with the state honour ‘Commander of the British Empire’ – for taking positive actions.

### **Peak Oil**

Dr. Roger Bentley's talk to the Earley Environmental Group on 25<sup>th</sup> April rang alarm bells about the economic impacts of the expected decline in global oil production in the near future but at least the prospect of continuing high prices should add weight to calls to reduce its use on environmental grounds.

Dr. Bentley's analysis, which was primarily concerned with conventional liquid oil supplies as opposed to gas or shale oils, did cast doubt on the economic and energy costs of using these alternative sources to provide liquid fuels. Globally most oil had been discovered before 1980, since which time we have been using more than has been found. For conventional oils UK production peaked in about 1999 and global production seems to have hit a ceiling in about 2005. Production from conventional and unconventional sources is expected to peak before 2030.

The talk also demonstrated the complexity of this subject. Differences between Proved and Probable reserves, unextractable reserves, false data submitted by suppliers, the costs and effects of injecting water and chemicals into oil wells to increase recovery, changes in demand, and the differences in reserves in different countries - all add to uncertainty of forecasting but the general picture was pretty clear.

Dr. Bentley has been a member of a Reading University group studying peak oil since 1994 and has published a number of papers on the topic. He was a Co-ordinator of the Oil Depletion Analysis Centre (ODAC), and a past Secretary of ASPO <http://www.peakoil.net/>. Over the years they have tried to persuade governments to take more action but with little success. His slides should be on the website <http://www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk/> soon.

### **Royal Society Report on People and Planet – and Rio+20 Conference**

This report, published in late April, <http://royalsociety.org/policy/projects/people-planet/report/> gives an overview of how global population and consumption are linked, and the implications for a finite planet.

It claims that “rapid and widespread changes in the world's human population, coupled with unprecedented levels of consumption, present profound challenges to human health and wellbeing, and the natural environment.”

“The 21<sup>st</sup> century is a critical period for people and the planet. The global population reached 7 billion during 2011 and the United Nations projections indicate that it will reach between 8 and 11 billion by 2050.”

“Human impact on the Earth raises serious concerns, and in the richest parts of the world per capita material consumption is far above the level that can be sustained for everyone in a population of 7 billion or more. This is in stark contrast to the world's 1.3 billion poorest people, who need to consume more in order to be raised out of extreme poverty.”

The report identifies three pressing challenges:

1. the world's 1.3 billion poorest people need to be raised out of extreme poverty.
2. in the most developed and the emerging economies unsustainable consumption must be urgently reduced.
3. global population growth needs to be slowed and stabilised, but this should by no means be coercive.

One recommendation is that "Population and the environment should not be considered as two separate issues. Demographic changes, and the influences on them, should be factored into economic and environmental debate and planning at international meetings, such as the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development and subsequent meetings."

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20 (or Stockholm+40), in Rio de Janeiro from 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> June, is to be attended by over 130 Heads of State, Vice Presidents, Heads of Government, and deputy Prime Ministers, including Nick Clegg for the UK. <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.html>

This conference seems to have a very low profile in the UK at present. In the context of the Royal Society report it would be useful to write to MPs and the papers pointing out the importance of this opportunity and demanding a strong performance from the UK.

The Declaration of the Stockholm 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment is at <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?documentid=97&articleid=1503> – Climate Change doesn't get a mention (very few people took it seriously back then) but there are a lot of fine-sounding principles.

### **Proposals for Thames Tower:**

Next to the proposed Station Hill redevelopment (see <http://www.stationhill-reading.co.uk/> and March/April newsletter) the former Foster Wheeler building "Thames Tower" is likely to be demolished and replaced with an even taller building.

The developers' ambition is to create an office building that fits alongside the proposed Station Hill redevelopment and with Reading Council's adopted framework for the area. They say they intend to:

- Provide the style of offices that meet the needs of multi-national companies.
- Provide space for shops and cafes at street level on the new station plaza and on Station Road. Complement the new station plaza with high quality architecture.
- Create a recognisable new landmark for Reading with its tallest building.
- Make a clear statement about Reading's ambitions to be a major commercial centre.

The developers will be holding a public exhibition on their proposals from May 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> – not sure exactly where or when, but a chance to see what is proposed and perhaps to influence the outcome ... Reading FoE has been approached by the developers for comments – if we agree to have a collective viewing of their exhibition or to meet with them we will make arrangements by e-mail.

Lines of questioning that occur include:

- The embedded carbon implications of demolishing and replacing Thames Tower – wouldn't refurbishment be better?
- Whether the proposals should include significant cultural and sporting facilities easily accessible from the station
- Whether adequate provision has been made for public transport links
- How much additional office space is appropriate to the centre of Reading – doesn't more office space simply lead to more commuting? Does Reading need more multi-national companies?
- Plans to include renewable energy and/or CHP? Ground-source heat? Energy efficiency of the building?
- Tall buildings – how do they perform in energy terms – embodied energy for a massive structure – energy in use with lifts etc. – do they shade other lower buildings preventing them from using solar energy?

Developer's website is at <http://www.thamestower.com/>

Reading Central Area Action Plan is at

<http://www.reading.gov.uk/staging/local-planning-policy/reading-central-area-action-plan/adoptedrcaap/>

This calls for tall buildings by the station, and also for a Mass Rapid Transit route down Garrard Street (which is not in the Station Hill proposals) and a cultural area to replace the Hexagon near Hosier Street (which has not been heard of recently).

### **Annual General Meeting:**

At our AGM on April 11<sup>th</sup> 2012 Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were elected to continue in their roles of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively. Activities for 2011/2012 were reviewed. As usual far more has happened than immediately comes to mind!

Financial report showed a loss on the year of £74.53 – including £25.35 subsidy to the Home Energy Workshop event held in June 2011. A collection of over £50 at a benefit night at the Afroba prevented a much greater shortfall. It was agreed to increase membership subscription rates from £7/£4 (waged/unwaged) to £8/£5 (waged/unwaged) for 2012/2013.

## Useful Websites etc.:

[www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk](http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk)  
[www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)

**GRE**N - Greater Reading Environmental Network <http://www.gren.org.uk/>.

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

Doorstep collection of WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) service in Reading being offered by Midex Reverse Technologies <http://www.midex-rt.com/>

True Food Co-op: [www.truefood.coop](http://www.truefood.coop) - Winner Best Retail Initiative BBC Food & Farming Awards 2011 - shop in Emmer Green and local markets!

Reading Borough Council Waste and Recycling:  
<http://www.reading.gov.uk/environmentandplanning/wasteandrecycling/>

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)

Local Food Directory, with links: [http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk/Local\\_Economy.htm](http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk/Local_Economy.htm)

RISC <http://www.risc.org.uk/readingfairtrade/>

## Reading FoE Officers

At our AGM on April 11<sup>th</sup> 2012 Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were 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 join in our day-to-day communications please email [info@readingfoe.org.uk](mailto:info@readingfoe.org.uk).

Alternatively we have a separate list for people who only want to receive our newsletter and information about important events and actions.

## Reading FoE Subscriptions – Subscribe NOW for 2012/13

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.