

# Reading Friends of the Earth

## Newsletter May/June 2013

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.

Change Your World – FoE Local Groups Newsletter:  
[http://www.foe.co.uk/community/resource/change\\_your\\_world.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/community/resource/change_your_world.html)



**Friends of  
the Earth**

### Diary:

**General Meetings:** Reading FoE usually meets on the second Wednesday of each month upstairs in Room 1 at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 8:00 p.m. Most meetings include discussion of general topics – some have a particular focus or guest speakers.

**May 8th:** – 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – future plans for the Bee Cause and summer events.

**June 12th:** - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – probably final preparations for Waterfest.

### Other Reading FoE Activities and Meetings:

**Saturday June 8th – Reading University BioBlitz** – we expect to have a BeeCause stall at this event on Campus – please let us know if you can assist on this day.

**Saturday June 15th – ‘Waterfest’** – annual event where we plan to have a stall – but this year we’ll be in a new location on Chestnut Walk because Nick Mercer of Campaign for Real Events will be joining us with some of his amazing pedal-powered machines <http://www.c-realevents.co.uk/> – please let us know if you can assist on this day – it should be busy.

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

**Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May – Free Parliament and Campaigning Training** – 10:00 to 13:00 in central Reading.  
<http://www.rvadirectory.org.uk/event/20130517/free-parliament-and-your-campaign-training>

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June – GREN Members Meeting** – a few short presentations by members on local and global actions and issues – plus an open forum – Earley – for details see <http://www.gren.org.uk/Events.cfm>

**Green Drinks at RISC** - is on the first Tuesday of every month. Come along to the Global Café from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m. to meet like-minded people for a chat over a drink or two. <http://www.greendrinks.org/berkshire/reading>

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### **The BeeCause**

The summer of buzz has already started! At Econet’s “Beanpole Day” (April 20<sup>th</sup>) at Caversham Court our stall – next to the Reading Beekeepers Association - and costumed helpers attracted people to sign our postcards calling for a Bee Action Plan. Photographs of our Bee-People appeared in both local papers.

Latest news is that the European Union is going to restrict the use of three neonicotinoid pesticides used to treat crops from 2014 despite lack of support from the UK government. A recent Dutch study suggests that a complete ban on one of the three neonicotinoids, imidacloprid (which is used to treat animals as well as crops), is necessary to protect invertebrates in water. <http://www.rspb.org.uk/news/345066-pesticide-restrictions-great-news-for-bees>

However Sir Mark Walport, the government’s new chief scientific adviser, insisted that a ban was not the best way forward for Britain and would lead to a switch to older more dangerous pesticides. The NFU said it could cost many millions of pounds in lost agricultural output.

FoE called the decision a significant victory for bees and common sense, but warned that pesticides are not the only threat bees face, and renewed its call for the UK Government to urgently introduce a Bee Action Plan.  
[http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/press\\_releases/eu\\_pesticide\\_vote\\_29042013.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/press_releases/eu_pesticide_vote_29042013.html)

For more information see FoE’s Bee Cause Campaign Hub at  
<http://forum.foe.co.uk/campaignhubs/index.php/page686.html>

## **Clean British Energy and the Energy Bill:**

There is still no date for the Energy Bill to return to the House of Commons. The good news about the delay is it buys yet more time to convince MPs to support Tim Yeo MP's 'clean power target' amendment.

## **Warm Homes and the Green Deal:**

Research commissioned by the Department of Energy and Climate Change from National Energy Action <http://www.nea.org.uk/> has found that many people in poorer households, struggling to heat their homes, are put off by the complexity of the Green Deal and the Energy Company Obligation under which low-income households were to be helped to fund energy-saving improvements.

FoE has joined the Energy Bill Revolution alliance <http://www.energybillrevolution.org/> and asks people to support their on-line petition "We call on the Government to use the money it gets from our carbon taxes to make our homes super-energy efficient – driving down our energy bills forever."

[http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/press\\_for\\_change/cold\\_home\\_ebr\\_39934.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/press_for_change/cold_home_ebr_39934.html)

Writing about the Green Deal in 'The Environmentalist' (the magazine of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment) Green Deal Assessor John Barwise of the consultancy QoL Environmental Management & Communications commented that:

- "According to DECC, carbon emissions from homes and workplaces need to fall by 29% and 13% respectively if the UK is to meet its legally-binding carbon budgets – which require UK emissions to be cut by 34% by 2020."
- "There remains a question mark over whether the Green Deal will have an impact on even a small proportion of the 26 million homes that could benefit from improved energy efficiency."
- "If emissions from homes and workplaces are to be reduced sufficiently to meet the UK's 2020 target, time is of the essence and the financial barriers associated with the Green Deal must be overcome speedily."

## **Biomass:**

FoE has joined with RSPB and other UK environmental groups to write to Government urging strict limits on subsidies for burning wood in power stations as part of the Energy Bill being debated in Parliament.

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/news/344887-strict-limits-needed-on-biomass-electricity>

Current Government plans to subsidise biomass electricity could see the sector consuming the equivalent of up to six times the UK's annual forestry harvest by 2017 – entailing substantial imports. The plans could have calamitous effects for businesses and the environment.

By 2017, DECC expect about 6GW of biomass power to be online (compared to 0.5GW currently), which will need the equivalent of up to 30 million tonnes of oven-dried wood. That's about six times the entire UK forest harvest. At present even if all forestry residues and offcuts in the UK were used for electricity they would only generate 1.3% of our electricity supply. [http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefing\\_notes/burning\\_wood\\_for\\_power.pdf](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefing_notes/burning_wood_for_power.pdf)

While critical of the proposed dash for wood FoE believes that bio-energy has a long-term role to play in bringing down greenhouse gas emissions. But only if it is done in a way that protects wildlife, people's livelihoods and guarantees emissions cuts. The Climate Change Committee estimates that by 2050 the sustainable domestic available resource will be sufficient to supply 8% of the UK's energy needs.

## **Safer Cycling Research:**

Transport for London has commissioned TRL in Bracknell to undertake a range of off-street trials of innovative cycling improvements. <http://www.trl.co.uk/cyclinginnovationtrials/>. The initiative follows on recent reports of accidents and deaths of cyclists in London – especially involving HGVs.

A video of trials of 'Dutch-style roundabouts' – in which an outer ring is created for exclusive use by cyclists was featured on BBC London news <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-22350776>. It looks as if it takes up a large land area, slows down traffic, and makes cyclists travel further to traverse the junction. The video showed at least one example of a car failing to give way to a cyclist.

It claims that during the last Mayoral Elections campaigners signed up all candidates to support segregated infrastructure.

## **Cycling Proposals for Reading in the News:**

The Council has published proposals for a Pedestrian/Cycle bridge across the Thames between Reading Bridge and Caversham Bridge. Comments are requested by 18<sup>th</sup> May.

<http://www.reading.gov.uk/council/Consultations/proposal-new-pedestrian-cycle-bridge-across-thames/>

The papers have also carried news of discussions about proposals to experimentally close a lane of Reading Bridge to allow cycle lanes to be created.

[http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/s/2132612\\_reading\\_bridge\\_cycle\\_lane\\_plan\\_angers\\_towns\\_tories](http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/s/2132612_reading_bridge_cycle_lane_plan_angers_towns_tories)

Both Labour and Conservative Councillors have denounced the proposals, arguing that nothing should be done to the existing bridges until the new Pedestrian/Cycle bridge is in place.

Reading Cycle Campaign's Keith Elliott says the scheme was discussed at a Traffic Management Advisory Panel in June 2012 and it was agreed that it should go ahead – subject to modelling and consultations – provided there were no objections. He says modelling showed that removing one southbound lane to create two cycle lanes had no significant detrimental effect on traffic flows and that Council officers had proposed the experimental, reversible, coning off of a lane to verify the modelling.

## **Park and Ride:**

Wokingham has been consulting on its proposed Park and Ride strategy – including a proposed site at Broken Brow to the east of Kennet Mouth. [www.wokingham.gov.uk/parkandrideconsultation](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/parkandrideconsultation). Proposals for Broken Brow, Mereok and Winnersh Triangle would all be on green space, and use of the Broken Brow site would add to pressure for an 'Expressway' bridge across Kennet Mouth.

While Park and Ride aimed at occasional visitors to congested town centres may have a place in a low-carbon transport strategy, providing park and ride for commuting from Wokingham's planned dormitory estates will encourage purchase of cars for commuting. More car ownership leads to more car mileage - people will choose to use an available vehicle for 'many uses other than commuting' rather than taking other options. The overall result may well be less exercise, more cost, more congestion, more carbon emissions, and quicker depletion of oil reserves.

Money invested in park and ride is money that cannot be invested in other options or used to support conventional bus services in the early years of the new developments while bus patronage builds.

As the draft strategy document (5.3) says "In a perfect world, persuading people to replace their complete car trips by the use of public transport would have the greatest impact on reducing congestion and pollution"

## **Air Quality Judgement:**

The UK Supreme Court has ruled that Britain has failed to keep within European air pollution limits in a case brought by Client Earth <http://www.clientearth.org/>, a group of environmental lawyers.

This is the first time a UK court has recognised that the government has failed in efforts to meet European air pollution limits. It means the government faces stiff European fines and British cities may have to ban cars and limit the entry of heavy goods vehicles to dramatically reduce air pollution.

Because the court also ruled that the European court of justice will have to step in to clarify some legal issues, the government may be able to delay acting for up to a year

## **Reading Climate Change Strategy Revision.**

The revision of the Reading Climate Change Strategy to run from 2013 to 2020 is progressing. The chapters are entering final editing stage and work is in progress to define the Action Plans and to develop methods to engage public, institutions and businesses with the programme. The expected launch date has slipped from July 2013 to September 2013. <http://www.reading2020.org.uk/climate-change/>

## **Reading FoE AGM:**

Our 2013 AGM was held as part of our April 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were elected to continue as Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively, and it was agreed to hold subscriptions at existing levels.

Because of the great success of two bee-themed fundraising events at RISC – arranged by Chris and Enrico – the group was much better off financially. It was agreed to donate £20 to GREN to help with the Environmental Network's running costs, and to look at purchase of new display boards for use at stalls and events.

## Useful Websites etc.:

Friends of the Earth 'England, Wales and Northern Ireland' [www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)

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

Transition Reading - Reading's Transition Town movement <http://www.transitionreading.org.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)

Pangbourne and Whitchurch Sustainability Group (PAWS) <http://www.pawsg.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)

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

## Reading FoE Officers

At our AGM on April 10<sup>th</sup> 2013 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 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 and information about important events and actions.

## Reading FoE Subscriptions – Subscribe NOW for 2013/14

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.