

Reading Friends of the Earth Newsletter May/June 2014



For more information: <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading> or www.readingfoe.org.uk
email 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

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. Meetings are open to all.

May 14th: – 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – topics likely to include a review of FoE campaigns for summer 2014 – we have received materials for the **Fracking** campaign which is likely to be a focus for the summer.

June 11th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – likely to include final preparations for Waterfest stall.

Other Reading FoE Activities and Meetings:

Saturday 14th June: - Reading FoE stall at **Waterfest** – helpers needed – details later by e-mail.

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

Tuesday 13th May – GREN Environmental Hustings – for local elections – see www.gren.org.uk

Sunday 18th May – **Repair Cafe** – at rLab at Unit C1 Weldale St, Reading, RG1 7BX – 12:00

Saturday 31st May – **MERL Fete** – may be opportunity for some Bee-related involvement – see e-mails.

Sunday 15th June – **Repair Cafe** – at RVA, Highbridge House, 16-18 Duke St, Reading RG1 4RU. 12:00 to 17:00

Monday 16th June - **GREN Members' Meeting** – Oxford Road Community Garden – details later on <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>

Bee Cause Progress

At Beanpole Day on 26th April we collected a further 47 signatures on the national FoE petition for a great National Pollinators Strategy, and gave away lots of postcards to remind people how to sign up on-line. Tanja was the best-dressed Bee – thanks also to Steve, Anne, Chris and Enrico. See Karen Blakeman's 'photos at <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10152436423508064.1073741830.554328063&type=1>

The petition was delivered in London on 1st May with 25,442 signatures. <http://www.foe.co.uk/news/over-25000-call-brilliant-bee-action-plan> - we now await the Government's launch of the strategy - expected in July. In summer government is expected to release a 'Call to Action' package for bees and other pollinators consisting of a simple message on their essential needs, simple actions to take and web-based detailed advice for farmers, land managers, gardeners and the public on how to meet these needs. We can work to publicise this.

FoE say "We are already planning the next phase of The Bee Cause over the summer and autumn. That will include going large on Bee Worlds (we now have over 160 nationwide) as well as getting ready for the launch of the final National Pollinator Strategy."

They intend to continue to work on Bee Worlds over the summer with a 'planting day' in September. They are having a 'Nature Away-Day' at their new London office on Saturday 31st May to work on widening the Bee Cause campaign to cover more general wildlife issues – anyone interested can sign up and go <http://forum.foe.co.uk/campaignhubs/index.php/topic,2646.msg5422.html#msg5422>

Henley-based **Brakspear** have sent seeds to 50 of their pubs to create Bee Worlds – we must arrange to visit some in July when the seeds have grown to flowers – perhaps in costume and by bicycle!

Visit to Agrivert Anaerobic Digestion plant in Wallingford

Joanna arranged a very interesting daytime visit to Agrivert on 7th May – eight people went along.

The privately-owned plant was built to service a 15-year contract with Oxfordshire County Council to treat 20,000 tonnes of food waste per year. It achieved full power in September 2013. <http://www.agrivert.co.uk/>

Oxfordshire has a weekly domestic food waste collection, which makes its fortnightly general waste collection more acceptable. Waste from other sources is also processed.

After de-packaging and macerating and removing contaminants the waste is fed into a system of 5 large tanks where it breaks down (typically over 120 days at about 36°C) to produce biogas (methane and CO₂) and a liquid fertiliser called digestate.

The biogas drives two 1.2 MW generators which have run at 96% capacity since September – about 11% is used by the plant. They claim to generate enough electricity to power over 4,800 homes.



This picture shows us with our hosts and part of the site building (only 3 staff are employed on the highly automated site) and four of the digester tanks.

The picture below shows the 'reception area' where a truck has just tipped domestic waste into a large underground trough, whence it is macerated and turned into 'soup' to feed the digesters.



Food waste often arrives in bags from the caddies used in Oxfordshire, and/or includes plastics or metal – this unsuitable material is automatically removed (orange peel is also removed!) and is seen coming out of the machinery on the left of this picture. It can then become refuse-derived fuel.

The technology seemed to work and the site seems well-managed – and it's good to know putrescibles are not going to landfill where they could slowly emit methane (the potent greenhouse gas).

FoE nationally supports AD as a valuable part of waste management strategy but any proposals should take into account system-level costs of collection, transport etc. for a sound assessment. http://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/anaerobic_digestion.pdf

We also saw 'windrow composting' on the site. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windrow_composting

Flooding and proposed 'Third Thames Bridge'

Enrico met with Rob Wilson MP on April 11th to discuss the issues around traffic congestion and flooding. Enrico was accompanied by road user charging expert John Walker. *Enrico reports as follows:*

Mr. Wilson was sufficiently interested to discuss sustainable transport with us that he extended our brief 15 minute meeting to just over a total 30mins.

Strong connection to Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (TV LEP)

The TV LEP was raised at first mention of a Local Transport Authority and referred to several times throughout the conversation. Rob supports this mode of transport planning and raised this as a key body for my reference. Since it is a business led body, there may be obvious concerns over how the plan integrates with the general public interest - however it offers substantial private business funds toward infrastructure projects. I am still investigating their plans (which include a 3rd Thames bridge) though private investment via their Strategic Economic Plan is £70m to support their ask from the Government's Local Growth Fund of £109m:

http://thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk/Strategic_Economic_Plan

Road User Charging

It was clear from his reaction to the briefly suggested variable methods of implementing road pricing (and at several other points) that he was likely amongst others in the general public having an automatic NO response. Following further points raised by John Walker, Rob said that he is not against congestion charging. He mentioned that Reading traffic planning designed the current sophisticated traffic signal control system with the view to implement Road Pricing in the future. He said that he would not publicly support tolls, however he found it an interesting prospect to consider demand management related to the upcoming 3rd Thames bridge proposal.

Traffic Modelling

A 3rd Thames bridge proposal is the target goal of funding for modelling traffic in the TV LEP covered area. It intends to use traffic data from its covered area and the neighbouring Oxfordshire LEP covered area. Effects on congestion will be informed entirely from this planned modelling.

Future Demand

I mentioned that this modelling should take into account the expected 33% congestion growth due to population growth in the UK indicated in a report from John Walker to the RAC. I also said that the modelling should not assume negligible traffic effects from the Crossrail plans (after phase 2) which arguably may encourage more Reading Station traffic.

Rob Wilson said the Heathrow Rail link should reduce ground traffic between Reading-Heathrow by 10%. However he had no idea about traffic effects from the Crossrail plans. I asserted that expected growth will cause further traffic congestion and that the case to consider demand management (road pricing) remains urgent as reported by the Independent Transport Commission. He asserted, and confirmed when I asked, that Reading's solution lies mostly in a 3rd Thames bridge and a bypass road.

He is mainly focussed on Rail infrastructure and a 3rd Thames Bridge. He seems keen to support cycling and further public transport including park and ride. He agrees that RBC should improve their level of public communication and pre-consultation.

John Walker raised the idea about a car-only tunnel (metro-route) being preferred based both on handling traffic diversion from town and on a cost basis. Rob Wilson was very interested (though a little skeptical) and requested more information from John.

Reading FoE AGM

This was held in the course of the April 9th 2014 meeting.

Co-ordinator Enrico Petrucco presented a Report on activities during the year. The Bee Cause had been a major feature and had been popular and successful in getting government action.

Treasurer John Booth presented the Accounts for the year. Turnover had been high because of the Bee Cause activity. The group funds had fallen during the year, partly because of purchase of display boards, but were still healthy with a net balance of £350.87.

Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were re-elected to positions of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively. Subscription levels were not changed. It was agreed that cheque signatories should be changed to Enrico Petrucco (Co-ordinator), John Booth (Treasurer), Chris Burden and Michael Brice. Cheques require two signatories.

It's not just us ... Sir David King thinks we're heading for trouble:

A meeting on 'Smart and Sustainable Cities' at the University was arranged by The Commonwealth Environmental Investment Platform in conjunction with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. *John reports (briefly) below:*

It's amazing what's going on in Reading – I didn't know about Clerkslegal LLP <http://www.clarkslegal.com/> and their offshoot Forbury Environmental <http://www.forburyenvironmental.com/>

There were five presentations at the meeting, all interesting, and the keynote speech was by Sir David King, the Foreign Secretary's Special Representative for Climate Change, and former Government Chief Scientific Advisor.

Sir David said gross world population growth was not the main global problem, but rather the predicted growth in numbers of the middle classes – people consuming between \$10 and \$100 per day – from 1 billion in 2000 to 5 billion in 2013. This was the driver of interlinked issues - Water, Food, Minerals, Energy, Climate Change, Ecosystems, Conflict and Health. He advocated densely populated cities, public transport, a move to a circular economy, extraction of nutrients from human waste, and HS2. He also said we should stop eating beef.

Useful Websites etc.:

Friends of the Earth 'England, Wales and Northern Ireland' 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

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

True Food Co-op: www.truefood.coop - shop in Emmer Green.

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.fishonline.org/> gives info on over-fishing, fish to avoid, etc.

www.ejfoundation.org (Environmental Justice Foundation)

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

Reading FoE Officers

At our AGM on April 9th 2014 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 .

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 2014/15

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.