

Reading Friends of the Earth Newsletter May/June 2015



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

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 13th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – discussion of current campaign areas.

June 10th – 8:00 p.m. at RISC - **General meeting** – discussion of current campaign areas – planning for the Waterfest and the Parliamentary Lobby.

Other Activities with Reading FoE:

Saturday 13th June – 10:00 am to 3:00 pm – **Waterfest** – help needed for FoE stall on the riverbank campaigning for solar schools, bees and wildlife.

Wednesday 17th June – **“Speak Up For the Love Of” ... Climate Coalition Parliamentary Lobby** – London – from 13:00 until about 17:00 – see below <https://www.facebook.com/events/426076617550720/>

Other Activities (not run by Reading FoE):

Sunday 17th May – **Repair Café** - 12:00 pm - 4:30 pm @ rLab, Unit C1, Weldale Street, Reading, RG1 7BX

Sunday 23rd May – **Reading Sustainability Centre** – afternoon outing to Mapledurham hydro scheme – plus GREN meeting - see <http://www.readingsustainabilitycentre.co.uk/>

Friday 29th May to Tuesday 2nd June – **Reclaim the Power** – mass action camp at Didcot with a day of creative action on 1st June <https://www.facebook.com/events/754780027953942/> and <http://www.nodashforgas.org.uk/>

Tuesday 2nd June – **Take control of your energy use!** - Reading Climate Action Network meeting – energy theme - Green Park Conference Centre, 100 Longwater Avenue - 4:30 to 6:30 – Presentations on: Reading’s Superhome; Innovative solutions to draughty homes; University of Reading’s work on energy – expect more details soon on <http://www.readingclimateaction.org.uk/news-events/>

Green Drinks at RISC – usually 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>

“Speak Up for the Love Of ...” - Climate Coalition Parliamentary Lobby

On 17 June, thousands of people from all over the country will be gathering at Parliament to meet their MP and talk to them about climate change. The day is being organised by The Climate Coalition, a diverse group of 100 organisations from across the UK including Friends of the Earth. It is particularly important to talk to newly-elected MPs while they have time to influence the UK position at the UN Conference of the Parties (COP21) on Climate Change in December in Paris which must agree a legally binding and universal agreement on climate action.

The Lobby Guide <https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/mass-lobby-guide-76491.pdf> says “It will be a day of great hope, a lot of fun, and a big step towards a better future. You’ll have a chance to meet other people who care about the impact of climate change, including from your own area, to hear great speakers and to help build a safer world.”

Sign up for more information at <http://www.foe.co.uk/page/join-mass-lobby-parliament-17-june> and please let Reading FoE know so people from Reading can arrange to travel together. For up-to-date news see also FoE’s Climate Campaign Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FOEclimate/>

“Low Level Radiation – a local, national and international issue”

The speaker at this joint Nuclear Awareness Group / Reading FoE meeting on 29th April was Pete Wilkinson, Nuclear Information Service Director, and a former Greenpeace UK Campaign Director.

He commented that the incident at Fukushima has resulted in an \$11 billion clean-up operation, but his talk was particularly concerned about emissions related to refuelling and maintenance operations at nuclear reactors.

He was critical of the ‘linear, no-threshold’ model for the effects of radiation that had been derived from the exposures caused by the bombing of Japan in 1945. He mentioned the ‘Second Event Theory’ – that might account for greater sensitivity to certain radioactive materials – see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Busby

He drew heavily on the work of Dr. Ian Fairlie who has pointed out that many studies, such as the German KiKK study, show increases in childhood leukaemia related to proximity to nuclear power plants. He suggested that this was due to exposure of unborn children to short-duration spikes in emissions of radioactive material – such as Tritium, Carbon-14 and Iodine 131 - during refuelling and maintenance operations when material can escape from the cooling systems and reactor vessels. <http://www.ianfairlie.org/news/childhood-leukemias-near-nuclear-power-stations-new-article/> and <http://www.no2nuclearpower.org.uk/radhealth/>

COMARE – the UK Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment - had found no *statistically significant* evidence of an association between leukaemia risk in children aged under five years old, and proximity to nuclear power plants. Mr. Wilkinson said that in Great Britain 20 cases of leukemia had been found in under-fives within 5 km of reactors when the expected number was 15.4 – so there was evidence of an effect even if it was not statistically significant.

Mr. Wilkinson was also critical of the government failure to force operators to provide estimates of radioactive material discharged during re-fuelling, and to instruct COMARE to engage with NGOs on these issues. He wants to persuade a number of NGOs to run a joint petition leading to a debate in parliament calling for more openness and co-operation.

Nuclear Awareness Group (NAG <http://www.nuclearawarenessgroup.org.uk/about>) is a Reading-based local group.

Car-Free Work Days

At our April meeting we had a presentation from Carl Emerson-Dam from the Climate Change Centre Reading about their proposals for monthly car-free work days.

Their website <http://www.cccrdg.org.uk/> contains useful links to the Council’s Air Quality management information and says that: “A car free day is the opportunity to make motorists more aware of the environmental impact of pollution and allow better use of public space.

“This is an event that has been held in cities around the world, with areas being closed off to cars thus encouraging people to use more sustainable forms of transport, such as walking, cycling or public transport. The event challenges people to:

- Spend one day without the use of a car
- Observe the difference this makes to their locality
- Reflect on how car use can be reduced permanently

“This will help us to achieve our aims of reducing air pollution, developing sustainability and increasing Reading’s green credentials through:

- Encouraging people to find alternatives to car use
- Reducing emissions / pollution
- Raising awareness”

Run on Sun

This campaign to help schools get PV panels on their roofs has been running for a couple of years – Reading schools, with help from the Council, are doing quite well in this regard.

But there’s always room for improvement so if you have any connections with a school please approach them – or pass their details to us – so we can send them a solar pack.

<https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/solar-pack-schools-46837.pdf>

One of the campaigns we will be running over the summer will be a ‘postcards to MPs’ campaign to get the government to relax the Treasury restrictions which prevent schools from borrowing money to invest in solar panels.

Bee Cause - and threats to Birds and Habitats

At our December meeting we discussed proposals for a Bee World on the corner of Trooper Potts Way and Vastern Road – a site just being vacated by the Reading Station up-grade team and in need of remedial work. We have been unable to establish dialogue with Network Rail so do not know what will happen to it – although it has recently been cleared of brambles.

Michael spotted a potential Bee World site in Earley by the side of Wokingham Road at Saffron Close – a large grassy verge in need of remediation after damage by construction vehicles - which we recommended to Earley Town Council who have cleared a plot to sow with flower seeds.

Over the summer FoE intends to lobby to extend the present EU ban on neonicotinoid pesticides and to work to defend two key EU Directives on Birds and Habitats against the **REFIT** initiative - the European Commission's Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme.

Although it sounds reasonable to review the effectiveness of the legislation the review is driven by a deregulation agenda with the aim of removing perceived barriers to economic growth so any changes to the Directives will be bad news for nature.

A 12-week public consultation was started at end April – maybe wait to complete it until more guidance is available ... although there's a lot in this blog <https://www.foe.co.uk/green-blog/why-do-you-care-about-nature> ... The consultation is at <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/EUNatureDirectives> and an introduction is at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations/pdf/nature_fitness/intro_en.pdf

Traffic Growth on the M4 – Keep the Hard Shoulder from J3 to J12!

In December 2014 Reading FoE worked with national FoE campaigners to start a regional e-campaign calling on people to respond to a consultation on plans to increase traffic on the M4 by converting the hard shoulder to use as an additional lane, requiring 11 bridges to be replaced, at a cost of up to £862 million.

The report on the consultation is at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/424596/5-1-Consultation-Report.pdf

In chapter 11, Page 208, giving the results of public consultation it says that 57% of responses were not in favour of the scheme. "For those opposed to the Scheme, by far the greatest number of issues raised related to safety concerns associated with the removal of the hard shoulder, along with environmental impacts, particularly noise and air quality."

Despite the fact that in section 4.2.7 it says that one of the five goals of 'Delivering Sustainable Transport' is to "know what the total carbon footprint is" there seems to be no other reference to 'carbon' or 'greenhouse' in the document.

Results of another consultation, solely on variable speed limits, are at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/425834/M4_J3_to_J12_SM_Response_to_VMSL_Consultation_Document.pdf

The Highways Agency has now applied to proceed with this Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project – see <http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk/projects/south-east/m4-junctions-3-to-12-smart-motorway/>

Reading FoE AGM 2015

This was held in the course of the April 8th 2015 meeting. Co-ordinator Enrico Petrucco was unable to attend the meeting but was willing to continue in his role.

John Booth presented a brief summary of activity which had included meetings on Biomass and Fracking with visiting speakers. Stalls at events had concentrated on Fracking, and calls for a Pollinators Strategy and 'Bee Worlds'. The group had created an e-campaign against hard-shoulder running on the M4, had responded to RBC on Recycling, and Enrico had met with Rob Wilson MP to talk about options instead of a third Thames Bridge.

Treasurer John Booth presented the Accounts for the year. The group funds had fallen during the year, partly because of losses on the two speaker meetings for which fees or expenses had to be paid, but were still healthy with a net balance of £227. It was suggested that an appeal to pay membership subscriptions should be made to those receiving the Newsletters electronically. Change of signatories to the bank account had been accomplished.

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 remain as Enrico Petrucco (Co-ordinator), John Booth (Treasurer), and Michael Brice. Cheques require two signatories.

Useful Websites etc.:

Friends of the Earth 'England, Wales and Northern Ireland' <http://www.foe.co.uk>

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

Reading Climate Action Network - <http://www.readingclimateaction.org.uk/>

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

Reading Sustainability Centre - <http://readingsustainabilitycentre.co.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

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

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 8th 2015 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 2015/16

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.