

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter May/June 2016

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



Diary:

General Meetings: Reading FoE usually meets on the **second Wednesday of each month** in Room 1 upstairs 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 11th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – hope to be joined by Siggie Huegemann to tell us about his plans for **African Hydrogen Power** www.afr-h2-p.com – as well as general business.

June 8th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – topics and details by e-mail.

Other Activities with Reading FoE:

Saturday 11th June – Green Fest – Transition Reading are arranging this in co-operation with the Water Fest which is on the same day. Stalls and events in Town Hall Square and workshops and refreshments in Saint Laurence's Church. Help needed for FoE stall from about 11:00 to 17:00. John and Chris talking about 'Smart M4'.

Sunday 19th June – 12:00 to 6:00 - **East Reading Festival** – we are investigating running a stall at this event – please save the date.

Other Activities (not run by Reading FoE):

Monday 16th May – 7:00 at RISC – **Transition Town Reading AGM** - <http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/>

Wednesday 25th May – 7:45 - GREN Climate Forum – **Climate change impacts on food security - learning from past food shocks** – see below.

Weekend 3rd - 5th June – Basecamp – FoE's annual gathering in Derbyshire – booking essential - may be 'sold out' by the time you read this ... <https://www.foe.co.uk/page/basecamp-2016>

Wednesday 15th June – 7:30 in Room 1 at RISC – **Reading Cycle Campaign Open Meeting**
<http://www.readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/>

Wednesday 29th June – Time TBA (see www.gren.org.uk) at RISC - GREN Climate Forum – **Climate change and Sustainable Development Goals** – - see below

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>

Repair Café – monthly - check website <https://www.facebook.com/ReadingRepairCafe>

Bees at Caversham:

On Saturday 23rd April we took a stall to Econet's 'Beanpole Day' at Caversham Court.

We were busy giving out information about bees and bee-friendly gardening, and postcards for children to colour in, and getting signatures on cards to MPs about neonicotinoid pesticides.

Visitors were invited to download a smartphone app to join in the 'Great British Bee Count' which runs from May 19th to June 30th and provided with identification charts. See <https://www.foe.co.uk/page/great-british-bee-count-2016-sign-up>



Bees at Caversham continued:

Evidence is building that neonicotinoid pesticides which are applied as agricultural seed coatings are contributing to the decline of birds and butterflies, as well as of bees. They remain in the environment and can be absorbed by wildflowers growing in field margins - appearing in nectar, pollen and foliage. In December 2013, three 'neonics' were placed under EU restrictions for a minimum of two years banning their use on certain crops. We are collecting signatures on petition cards to MPs to have the ban continued and extended to all crops.

For latest FoE information on Bees see:

<https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/threat-bees-from-neonicotinoid-pesticides-93919.pdf>

Oxford FoE have a Bee Fest on 7th May – <https://www.foe.co.uk/groups/oxford/events/Oxford-Bee-Fest-2016>

Beanpole Day is an annual event run by Econet Conservation Volunteers to fund their voluntary work for wildlife by selling beanpoles and peasticks to gardeners. Many other groups involved in food or wildlife joined them in the riverside gardens – including the Wildlife Trust, Food4families, Reading Town Meal, RSPB, and Reading Beekeepers - and Nature Nurture provided activities for children.

Thanks to Chris, Steve, Steve, Tanja, and John - and to Ruth and Elspeth from Maidenhead FoE.

Waste And Recycling

Enrico, Tricia and John took up an invitation to discussions with RBC on 12th April. We met with Mark Smith (Head of Transportation and Streetcare), David Moore (Neighbourhood Services Manager), and Michele Prior (Senior Waste Officer) from RBC, and with Oliver Burt from re3.

Reading is only recycling around 33% of its domestic waste so has a long way to go to meet the national target of 50% by 2020. We said we were interested in reducing environmental impact of waste but the Council needed to focus on achieving the mandatory targets at acceptable cost because government cuts had meant resources were very limited and there was a need to find financial savings

Despite this some progress was being made by RBC: The first year of its Waste Minimisation Strategy had been spent reviewing options and the Action Plan had been revised. The costs of landfill and incineration were high so the Council had incentives to promote recycling, but variations in the market price for recycled waste were a problem.

- Reading has recently launched 40 'dual' bins in the town centre so that recyclable material can be separated at source on the streets.
- Michele Prior's team has just recruited a waste minimisation officer to work on outreach to schools – to educate children.
- RBC are co-ordinating communications with re3 and social media use was increasing. Information on what can be recycled locally is at <http://www.fccenvironment.co.uk/what-can-i-recycle.html>. We were encouraged to follow @re3recycling on Twitter
- 'Doorstepping' of residents with information had been tried in Baker Street area with help from local community activists.

We were told that Council wanted to maximise use of existing systems before investing in techniques for food waste recycling ... which was still under consideration ... but without food waste they would have to capture a very high proportion of other recyclable material from the present residual waste stream. Experience elsewhere with food waste was that it was not being collected in predicted quantities, raising doubts about cost-effectiveness.

We suggested that collecting food waste in Caversham could be sub-contracted to South Oxfordshire and that local 'Bring Banks' could be installed to facilitate recycling. Macerators in kitchen sinks could be made mandatory in new properties to capture food waste.

We offered to help with publicity on stalls and community events, and to seek volunteers to be involved, and to review technical and economic options. We asked for re3 Stakeholders' meetings to be resumed and held at times when working people could attend, so that more people could be involved.

LED Street Lighting:

At our February meeting Simon Nicholas visited to tell us about the campaign against blue-rich LED streetlights. A website for campaigners on this topic has been established at <http://allagainstbluewhiteledstreetlights.webs.com/>

Reading Climate Forum

GREN has been granted funding by Reading Climate Action Network www.readingclimateaction.org.uk to run four meetings to discuss relevant topics in the first half of 2016 – perhaps there will be more in the autumn. The first two were on ‘Extreme Events’ and ‘Carbon Pricing’. The third and fourth are as follows:

- Wednesday 25th May – 7:45 - **Climate change impacts on food security - learning from past food shocks** – presentation by Dr. Jacob Bishop from UoR ‘Agri-Food Economics and Social Science’ Department - Reading Quaker Meeting House, 2 Church Street, RG1 2SB.
- Wednesday 29th June – Time TBA see www.gren.org.uk – RISC - GREN Climate Forum – **Climate change and Sustainable Development Goals** – Dr. Rayner Mayer of UoR will develop ideas presented in Christiana Figueres’ recent Grantham Lecture - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smw67wmbVB4>.

Climate, Fracking, and Open-Cast Coal

Nationally FoE has been taking coals to Westminster to highlight the campaign against new open-cast coal mines <https://www.foe.co.uk/news/why-we-just-dumped-tonne-coal-westminster>

There have been many obituaries of Professor David MacKay, creator of ‘Sustainable Energy Without the Hot Air’, such as <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/apr/18/sir-david-mackay-obituary> . One of his last publications was an article on carbon pricing <http://www.nature.com/news/price-carbon-i-will-if-you-will-1.18538> .

An article on public attitudes to carbon pricing – finding that in the USA there may be more support if revenues are used to support specific energy projects than if they are used to cut taxes is at <http://www.vox.com/2016/4/26/11470804/carbon-tax-political-constraints> .

‘Smart M4’ Examination:

The examination into proposals for a ‘managed motorway’ with ‘all lane running’ is over and its report will go to the government by 3rd June. FoE, Reading FoE, and Campaign for Better Transport were leading critics.

Conversion of a relatively short section of the M3 to ‘Smart Motorway’ is causing disruption and full opening is delayed while additional works are undertaken.

<http://www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/surrey-news/m3-smart-motorway-roadworks-overrun-11080294>

Parliament’s Transport Committee is investigating ‘All Lane Running’. Evidence has looked at safety implications – including delays in getting emergency services to incidents when there is no hard shoulder.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/transport-committee/news-parliament-2015/all-lane-running-tor-15-16/> .

Reading Town Meal - Crowdfunding:

We expect to have a stall at Reading Town Meal when it returns on 1st October 2016 ... The organisers are running a ‘Crowdfunding’ appeal to raise money towards it and at end of April are almost halfway to their £3,000 target. The appeal runs to Friday 13th May <http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/reading-town-meal>

Reading Local Elections 2016:

GREN ran a local election hustings meeting on April 15th – the report (including links to ‘getreading’ blog and report) is at http://www.gren.org.uk/resources/GREN_PREnvironmentalQuestionTime2016_website.pdf

It’s also worth looking for environmental policies in the parties’ manifestos – not least to be reminded of the many other issues local politicians have to address! Three manifestos found by search engines are:

https://issuu.com/readinglabour/docs/final_electionbanner ; <https://reading.greenparty.org.uk/policy1.html>
and <http://readinglibdems.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/2016-reading-libdems-manifesto.pdf>

EU Referendum – 23rd June:

FoE has argued that there are strong environmental reasons in favour of remaining in the EU - claiming that being part of the European Union has given us: cleaner beaches and drinking water; less air pollution; safer products, and protected wildlife <https://www.foe.co.uk/page/eu-referendum-environment> .

An environmental audit committee report agrees: “The UK’s membership of the EU has been a crucial factor in the shaping of its environmental policy since it joined the Union in the 1970s. None of the witnesses to our inquiry, even those who made criticisms, made an environmental case for leaving the European Union.”

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmenvaud/537/53702.htm>

And former Labour Leader Ed Miliband joined Environment Secretary Liz Truss, former Energy Secretary Ed Davey, and Green MP Caroline Lucas in a ‘cross-party’ call to remain.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/may/02/eu-is-central-to-tackling-climate-change-says-ed-miliband>

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 13th 2016 Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were re-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 2016/17

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.