

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter May/June 2017

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 10th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – to include discussion of consultations on Heathrow Expansion and Reading Local Plan, latest on Air Quality measurements, and planning our presence at Waterfest in June.

June 14th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – topics by e-mail later

Other Activities with Reading FoE:

Saturday, June 10th – Waterfest – Please offer to help on our riverside stall – in shifts 10:00 to 5:00.

Other Activities (not run by Reading FoE):

Saturday 6th May – Divestment action with Global Justice Now – 10am – 3pm outside M&S, Broad Street, Reading, as part of the week of Global Divestment Mobilisation. Petitioning the CEOs of Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds and RBS banks to divest from fossil fuels.

Thursday 18th May 7:30 at RISC – **Transition Town Reading AGM** - informal with general discussion and food - please bring some! <http://mailchi.mp/5947ab4badec/transition-town-reading-newsletter?e=f88cf9585f>

Sunday 21st May 12:00 to 4:30 - **Repair Cafe** - rLab, C1 Weldale Street, RG1 7BX ... all the usual opportunities plus a pop-up Reading Bicycle Kitchen now that Jackson's Corner has closed. www.readingrepaircafe.org.uk

Wednesday 24th May – 7:00 at RISC – **'Brexit and the Nuclear Industry'** - Keith Taylor MEP will be talking and answering questions with especial reference to Reading's local AWE sites. (Presumably some risk of cancellation because of General Election – best to check beforehand www.nuclearawarenessgroup.org.uk)

Thursday 25th May – 7:30 at RISC – **'Climate Change: The Opportunity'** - Dr Robert Hutchison, founder of Winchester Action on Climate Change, will talk about what we as citizens can do in response to the crisis. (Event arranged by Transition Town Reading.)

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>

Tour the **University's Meteorological Observatory** – 3:00 pm every Friday 16th June to 7th July – admission free, booking essential, book on www.met.reading.ac.uk/observatorymain

Out and about in April:



Beanpole Day

Bees and friends by the Thames



Climate March

Talking about Air Quality



Climate March

Pedalling for PA

22nd April - Bees and Beanpole Day:

We had a busy Bee-day in Caversham Court getting signatures on a petition sheet to keep the EU ban on neonicotinoid pesticides and signatures on Bee-cards to MPs (for delivery after the election) on the same topic. And probably coincidentally the following week the government rejected for this year an application for their continued use by the National Farmers' Union (NFU).

The **Great British Bee Count** is running again from 19th May to 30th June – register to receive invitation to the App for your phone when it is released: <https://act.foe.co.uk/act/join-great-british-bee-count>

For a recent review of evidence on **Bees and Neonicotinoids** from FoE see:

<https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/bees-threat-from-neonicotinoid-pesticides-89431.pdf>

Brakspear's **Honey Bee Beer** has already raised £600 for FoE – we have until the end of May to try it at one of the pubs listed on this link <https://brakspear.co.uk/new-brakspear-honey-beer-supports-bee-campaign/> .

30th April - Reading Climate March:

This march for jobs, justice and the climate was arranged by Climate Change Centre Reading. It was held on April 30th and featured pauses for wayside presentations from different groups on issues and opportunities ranging from the Bicycle Kitchen to Plastics, Divestment from Fossil Fuels, and Garden Cities. We contributed a brief presentation and activity on Air Quality in Reading and one of our Bees was prominent throughout and helped to power the pedal-powered public address system.

Heathrow Expansion

We have until 25th May to respond to the Department of Transport's consultation on the proposed '**Airports National Policy Statement**' to set the planning requirements for a Northwest Runway at Heathrow Airport to be built by 2030.

- At least 725,000 people are already impacted by aircraft noise from Heathrow.
- Air pollution levels around Heathrow already exceed the EU Legal limits.
- The transport infrastructure required for a 3rd runway could cost the taxpayer over £5bn.
- A 3rd runway would make it less likely that the UK would meet its climate targets.

Environmental Audit Committee Chair, Mary Creagh MP, recently commented (<https://t.co/zaB7ng8E7J>):

- "Heathrow expansion should only go ahead if the Government has a clear plan for the extra air pollution, carbon emissions and noise.
- "I am pleased to see the Government agrees with my Committee's recommendation on measuring the noise impacts, but Ministers are still refusing to guarantee that EU air quality targets won't be quietly dropped after we leave the EU, have no national plan for air pollution, and their carbon calculations are a fantasy.
- "Ministers are using this unnecessary early election to duck their responsibilities to the environment, and to the communities who will be affected by a new third runway at Heathrow."

See the official documents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/heathrow-expansion-draft-airports-national-policy-statement>

Easier to read an unofficial summary <http://stopheathrowexpansion.co.uk/sevenhurdlesofheathrow/> and comments on <http://stopheathrowexpansion.co.uk/consultation-hub/>

We'll discuss a Reading FoE response next week, but please submit your own comments on-line – don't worry if you haven't mastered all the details – give your opinion! <https://runwayconsultation.dialoguebydesign.com/>

**"Like many local residents,
I strongly welcome the cancellation
of the third runway at Heathrow"**

Theresa May, 20th May 2010



New Local Plan:

Reading's draft new local plan – taking plan coverage forward from 2026 to 2036 - is out for consultation until 14th June. If we believe that infinite growth on a finite planet is impossible should we question a plan that calls for 658 new homes to be built in the Borough every year until 2036 with no end in sight, and similar levels of growth in neighbouring authorities?

See <http://www.reading.gov.uk/newlocalplan> - there's a lot to read - suggest start with the Consultation Leaflet!

Cycling on the Thames Path:

From 27th April to 25th May Reading is conducting a consultation to change the Thames Path to a joint footpath and cycle track between Roebuck Hotel and the mouth of the River Kennet. The consultation web page is at <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/dens/proposed-thames-path-cycle-track>

Reading Climate Change Partnership (RCCP) and Climate Change Strategy:

Revision of the Reading Climate Change Strategy is in progress. It is expected to go to public consultation in May.

Energy and Climate References:

FoE has released a briefing on **using renewable sources to maintain UK electricity supplies**. It concludes "Renewable energy sources, combined with high levels of storage, demand side response and the ability to trade power across regions will be the best solution to decarbonize the UK's electricity system, delivering affordable and reliable energy." For (a lot) more detail see <https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/keeping-lights-briefing-103163.pdf>

Here's an optimistic review of Canada's prospects from the Deputy Governor of the Bank of Canada <http://www.bankofcanada.ca/2017/03/thermometer-rising-climate-change-canada-economic-future/> which particularly references a report on **British Columbia's Revenue-Neutral Carbon Tax** which has been running since 2008. In 2015 its carbon price was more than three times that of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme. Empirical and simulation models suggest that the tax has reduced emissions in the province by 5–15%. At the same time, models show that the tax has had negligible effects on aggregate economic performance. https://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/sites/default/files/publications/ni_wp_15-04_full.pdf

Air Quality:

Air quality has continued to make the national and local news – diesel scrappage schemes are being widely discussed along with clean air zones and other possible initiatives. Client Earth have been doing a great job making the legal case <https://www.cleanair.clientearth.org/> and this iema (Inst. Env. Management and Assessment) webinar is full of information <https://www.iema.net/event-reports/2017/03/08/air-quality-in-the-uk-trends-science-and-politics/> - you can either watch the whole thing (takes over an hour but you can speed over less interesting parts) or you can look at each of the two sets of presentations slides and then decide if you want to hear the voice-overs.

Diesels were encouraged because they do produce less CO2 than petrol vehicles but manufacturers have failed to match on-the-road emissions that affect air quality to the test standards. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/apr/07/how-conquering-carmakers-caused-the-diesel-air-pollution-crisis>

After more legal wrangling the government has said it will publish its proposals to reach EU legal limits by 9th May – to be adopted later in the year. Too late for the local elections and the Reading FoE newsletter!

We have been experimenting with diffusion tubes for measuring NO2 supplied by FoE. We deployed one near Reading Station for a fortnight before Christmas and it gave a reading of 61.9ug/m3 so for this period was well over the EU limit of 40ug/m3 for annual average concentration.

Since then we deployed five more tubes in Earley and South Reading and the results are plotted on this map: <https://www.foe.co.uk/page/how-clean-air-where-you-are> (note the dates are not correct – the tubes were up for four weeks). As would be expected the M4 is a fairly polluted location, well above the EU limit, but no-one lives there. The other locations, some in people's gardens, all registered above 50% of the EU legal mean annual limit for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) which is 40ug/m³ - and were up to around 70% of the limit.

We are awaiting results from five more tubes that we deployed closer to Reading town centre.

Doughnut Economics:

"Humanity's 21st century challenge is to meet the needs of all within the means of the planet. The Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries is a playfully serious approach to framing that challenge, and it acts as a compass for human progress this century."

Moving beyond the 'three legged stool', 'Venn Diagram', and 'concentric circles' (or 'nested dependency') views of social, environmental and economic issues Kate Raworth's new book, TEDx talk, and series of brisk on-line animations are useful and relevant <https://www.kateraworth.com/>.

UK Cycling Numbers Up!

Cycling UK reports: As we try to get more people cycling through great projects like the [Big Bike Revival](#), there was some good news this week as the Government published the latest [Road Traffic Estimates for Great Britain in 2016](#).

At 3.5 billion vehicle miles, pedal cycle traffic on roads in 2016 was 23% above the figure ten years before and 6.3% up on 2015. Although four-fifths of the road cycle miles ridden in 2016 were on minor roads, the largest proportional increase was on 'A' roads (up 11.9% on rural 'A' roads and 13.6% on urban 'A' roads compared to 2015).

Pedal cycle traffic still represents only around 1% of all traffic on roads, though – and car traffic grew by 2.3% from 2006 to 252.6 billion vehicle miles, the highest annual estimate ever. Van traffic continued to grow more quickly than any other vehicle type, rising 4.7% to 49.1 billion vehicle miles. Bus traffic fell by almost 25% from 2006 to 2016.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/611304/annual-road-traffic-estimates-2016.pdf

Basecamp Discussions:

Proposals for Basecamp discussions are at <https://www.organisedfeedback.com/foe/login.aspx> (login required) - some interesting comments this year on topics such as nuclear power.

Bokashi – Growing New Soil from Food Waste:

At Beanpole Day we got talking about food waste with one of our visitors who drew our attention to Bokashi <http://bokashiliving.com/> as a means to transform scraps into microbe and nutrient-rich pre-compost in a convenient anaerobic process indoors.

Compared to regular composting or wormeries he claimed it is faster, creates no stink or gunge in kitchen or compost bins, with no flies, no turning compost, and no risk of a dead wormery. While it can be done in an individual household basis it could lend itself to community action, from groups of flats to groups of organic growers. When a UK average household's food waste is diverted from landfill to garden or field it saves the council £25 per year in landfill tax no longer payable.

Kitchen waste is added to a lidded bin with Bokashi bran - a dry mixture of bran and molasses that has been infused with beneficial micro-organisms – and after a few weeks the process is complete and the material can be added to a compost heap or dug into the ground. Typically two bins are used – one taking current waste arisings and the other sealed and maturing for about a two-week period. The key difference from other techniques is that Bokashi feeds energy, organic carbon and nutrients directly to a soil's ecosystem, without having to maintain a separate and vulnerable population (e.g. a wormery) and without the massive (60%+) losses of energy and carbon from decomposition.

The website for heavily subsidised Bokashi kits is <https://evengreener.com/composting/food-waste/kitchen/>. There is Bokashi bran in the kit, and it will be months before a refill is needed. Another recommended link is Jenny's Bokashi Blog at <https://bokashiworld.wordpress.com/>.

Reading FoE AGM 2017:

This was held during our April meeting. The activities of the previous year were reviewed. Campaigning against the 'Smart M4' and for better Air Quality had resulted in some useful local media coverage – TV, radio, print and internet. Stalls and events had largely focussed on 'The Bee Cause' and Fracking.

Group funds showed a small surplus on the year because of two unexpected but very welcome donations. At £209 expenditure was dominated by costs of room-hire for regular meetings. Expenditure in the previous year had been substantially higher because of 'Smart M4' leaflets which had been grant-funded by FoE.

Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were re-elected to the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively.

Help Friends of the Earth do more ...

See www.foe.co.uk

Sign up for e-mail updates

https://www.foe.co.uk/news_events/enews_index

Make a regular donation and receive 'Earth Matters' magazine:

<https://www.foe.co.uk/donate/regular-monthly-donation>

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 12th 2017 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 2017/18

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.