

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter May/June 2019

For more information: <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading> or www.readingfoe.org.uk
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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. (*Note - July meeting is likely to be different.*) Most meetings include discussion of general topics – some have a particular focus or guest speakers. Meetings are open to all.

Wednesday May 8th – 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting** – topics expected to include discussion of campaigning on climate change.

Wednesday June 12th - 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting** – topics by e-mail later. Planning for Waterfest and East Reading Festival.

Other Activities with Reading FoE

Sunday May 12th – 17:00 - film screening of **A Plastic Ocean** – back of Global Café at RISC – see below.

Saturday June 15th – Reading FoE stall at **Waterfest** – Kennet-side – probably focus on climate change. Please note date if you can help – will e-mail with more details later.

Sunday June 23rd – Reading FoE stall at **East Reading Festival** – Palmer Park – probably focus on climate change. Please note date if you can help – will e-mail with more details later.

Other Activities (not run by Reading FoE so check for changes):

Tuesday May 7th – 19:30 – **Harris Garden Bumblebee Project** – Bumblebees *and their mites*, a talk by Reading University PhD student Robin McArthur. – EEG event in Function Room, Maiden Place Community Centre, Earley

Saturday May 11th – 14:00 – **SOAR** meet at Horseshoe Bridge to look over the former MRT site and discuss how this important wildlife corridor and green lung can be improved. Bring your ideas!

Wednesday May 15th – 17:30 – 18:30 - followed by reception - **Sooner or Later: Shifting the timing of electricity demand** - Lecture Theatre L022 G.01, London Road Campus. Register please <https://www.gren.org.uk/Events.cfm>

Thursday May 23rd - 18:00 – **Future of Tech Economy in Reading** - Reading 2050 meeting - Lecture Theatre L022 G.01, London Road Campus. <https://www.gren.org.uk/Events.cfm>

Thursday May 23rd – 19:30 – **Transition Town Reading AGM** – Room 3 at RISC

Thursday June 13rd – 14:00 – 17:00 - **Launch of discussions to create Reading's new Climate Change Strategy 2020-25** - Reading Council Chamber – registration required. <https://www.gren.org.uk/Events.cfm>

Thursday June 20th -18:00 – **Current and Future Role of Thames Valley LEP** - Reading 2050 meeting - Lecture Theatre L022 G.01, London Road Campus. <https://www.gren.org.uk/Events.cfm>

Wednesday June 26th - London – **Show the Love Climate Lobby** – get in touch if you plan to go

Repair Cafe – usually third weekend of month – <http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/projects/reading-repair-cafe/>

Reading Bicycle Kitchen – 'pop-up' events in various locations – see <http://www.readingbicyclekitchen.org/>

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>



Film show at Global Café – Sunday 12th May at 17:00 – free.

Beautiful and harrowing documentary film (97 mins) followed by discussion of solutions. <https://plasticoceans.org/about-film/>

A journalist, a free diver, and scientists and researchers travel around the world to explore the fragile state of our oceans. They uncover alarming truths about plastic pollution, and investigate solutions.

Extinction Rebellion and Climate Change

The protests in London over Easter, plus David Attenborough's film "Climate Change – The Facts", have certainly brought the issue to public and media attention and doubtless contributed to Parliament acknowledging a 'Environment and Climate Emergency' <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-48126677>

Several members of Reading FoE are also involved in Extinction Rebellion Reading (XRR)

<https://www.facebook.com/xrReading/> and took part in the London disruption.

<https://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/17585882.reading-extinction-rebellion-campaigners-join-london-climate-protest/>

'Climate Change – The Facts' is now on youtube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ypaUH57MO4&fbclid=IwAR041Py0In_projbowWw2VcvkDqraaHEnQdm3-3DfB0vial1wqEbeftsp6k

Extinction Rebellion's petition for Wokingham to declare a Climate Emergency is now on Change.org

<https://www.change.org/p/wokingham-borough-council-declare-a-climate-emergency-in-wokingham>

Planning for a Low Carbon Economy

This meeting in Reading on 24th April was attended by local planners, by Councillors Page and Rowland, and by many local activists. There were six presentations in all of which two were particularly striking (links below).

Reading Pathway to Zero Carbon 2050 2030:

This presentation by Ben Burfoot (RBC Sustainability Manager) on reducing Reading's carbon emissions to 'net zero' by 2030, in line with the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency, was of particular local interest. He reviewed the demand for heat and electricity and the available renewable and energy-efficiency technologies. His estimates suggested that a £3.5 bn investment would be needed but the return would be £13 bn over 30 years. However there was a significant gap between energy supply and demand which he was not sure how to fill from local sources.

Planning for the Climate Challenge:

Dr. Hugh Ellis of the Town and Country Planning Association gave a stimulating presentation and introduced the December 2018 up-dated guide for planners from RTPA and RTPI <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/planning-for-climate-change> which goes over the issues and highlights the opportunities.

It is critical of government inaction, saying:

- "Local plans in England are not dealing with carbon dioxide emissions reduction effectively, nor are they consistently delivering the adaptation actions necessary to secure the long-term resilience of local communities.
- "This inaction is due partly to a chronic lack of resources in English local government, which has contributed to a loss of skills on energy and climate change. But it is also related to the government's cancellation of both the zero-carbon commitment and the Code for Sustainable Homes, as well as the deregulation of planning through the expansion of permitted development, which has led to the conversion of buildings for residential use without effective planning controls."

It offers encouragement for action:

- "For example, the cost of onshore wind has fallen by 23% since 2010 and the cost of solar photovoltaic electricity has fallen by 73%. Furthermore, many of the solutions, such as the delivery of green infrastructure, have multiple benefits in building resilience while also enhancing biodiversity and human health and wellbeing.
- "As many other nations have discovered, action on climate change can be a driver for economic renewal and for new models of energy ownership that genuinely localise our economies."

A summary of the day, including links to the presentations, is at

http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Planning_for_Low_Carbon_Economy.docx

Committee on Climate Change 'Net Zero' Report and target dates

On 2nd May the Committee published its 'net zero' report <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/net-zero-the-uks-contribution-to-stopping-global-warming/>

"A net-zero GHG target for 2050 will deliver on the commitment that the UK made by signing the Paris Agreement. It is achievable with known technologies, alongside improvements in people's lives, and within the expected economic cost that Parliament accepted when it legislated the existing 2050 target for an 80% reduction from 1990. ... Current policy is insufficient for even the existing targets."

"Falls in cost for some of the key zero-carbon technologies mean that achieving net-zero is now possible within the economic cost that Parliament originally accepted when it passed the Climate Change Act in 2008."

"The foundations are in place throughout the UK and the policies required to deliver key pillars of a net-zero economy are already active or in development. ... However, these policies must be urgently strengthened and must deliver tangible emissions reductions – current policy is not enough even for existing targets."

Extinction Rebellion have called for a target of net zero by 2025, and say a 2050 target “Gives us only a 50% chance of staying within 1.5C degrees even if we follow all its recommendations. This is reckless. Because of the colossal shift in public attitudes within the last fortnight, it is now politically realistic to push much harder towards a date far closer to 2025, than to 2050.”

Friends of the Earth comment: “A fifty-fifty chance of exceeding 1.5 degrees is “worse odds than Russian roulette” and we must reach net zero emissions faster to avoid the worst effects of climate chaos”

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change/ccc-report-theres-no-speed-cameras-road-net-zero> . The national FoE website is at <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change> and has a link to a 6-point Climate Action Plan <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-action-plan>

In December FoE had released a Briefing “A pathway to ‘net zero’ greenhouse gas emissions”. “This briefing illustrates that UK could reach ‘net zero’ by 2045 or earlier, and it makes policy recommendations. **But more important than the date for ‘net zero’ is minimising cumulative emissions on the pathway.** It is cumulative emissions that matter most and it was this logic that led to the Climate Change Act and its ground-breaking five yearly carbon budgets.” <https://cdn.friendsoftheearth.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/Pathway-net-zero-greenhouse-gas-emissions-UK.pdf>

Whatever the ‘net zero’ target date, because CO2 persists in the atmosphere for many years the UK should target very significant reductions by 2025 and 2030 to reduce future risks and show it is making every effort to address the emergency. We also need to start to take account of ‘carbon leakage’ - emissions in other countries that supply us with imports – so-called ‘consumption accounting’ rather than ‘production accounting’.

Friends of the Earth Climate Campaign Briefings

Enrico attended a ‘Groundswell’ event on 27th April and has reported on a key presentation on the connection between extractivism, climate change, and food security in the context of Environmental and Social Justice. See Reading FoE Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/510395548980140/> entry by Enrico on 3rd May.

John ‘attended’ a webinar in April – FoE groups should assist in formation of ‘Climate Action Groups’ within the wider community. FoE were proposing to particularly focus on ‘Nature’ with a target to double the number of trees in the UK, and ‘Transport Infrastructure’.

Heathrow Court Action

FoE’s challenge has been dismissed by the High Court on the grounds that the Paris Agreement on Climate Change has not been taken into UK law so it need not be taken into consideration. FoE plan to appeal this decision.

The argument was that the decision to build the third runway is unlawful due to its failure to consider the climate change and sustainable development implications of the project and the consequences on future generations.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/01/high-court-dismisses-attempt-to-block-third-heathrow-runway>

Oxford-Cambridge Expressway:

Chris represented us at the ‘No Expressway Alliance’ <https://www.noexpresswayalliance.org/> ‘Activists Conference’ on 30th March at Bicester. He thinks that stopping or modifying the proposals will take a campaign involving national organisations to take on the government. A report on presentations at the Conference is at:

<https://www.noexpresswayalliance.org/stopping-the-expressway-a-no-expressway-alliance-conference/>

‘The Expressway is an abomination. It will increase traffic, noise, pollution and ill health and worsen climate change’, said Chair of the No Expressway Alliance Hazel Dawe in a speech to Oxfordshire County Council on 2nd April. Every Tory county councillor then voted against opposing the Expressway.

Beanpole Day 2019

Thanks to everyone who helped on our stall on April 23rd. We focussed on the national FoE petition calling for reduction in pesticide use <https://act.friendsoftheearth.uk/act/shape-future-our-countryside> and the Expressway Alliance petition against the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway.

Other issues

There are lots of articles on other issues on FoE’s new Policy and Insight website <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/>

Reading FoE AGM 2019

This was held during our April 10th meeting. Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were re-elected to the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively.

John presented a statement of accounts showing the group had net assets of £465.97p. Income was boosted by two exceptional donations totalling £225, without which expenditure would have exceeded income by £244.45. Expenditure was dominated by £270.74 room hire plus photocopying charge from RISC for 11 regular meetings and a public meeting in conference hall. We made £50 donations to SOAR and to Campaign for Better Transport.

Useful Links and General Information:

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 - <https://readingcan.org.uk>

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

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

Save Our Ancient Riverside - <https://saveourancientriverside.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 10th 2019 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 (currently 6 per year) and information about important events and actions.

Reading FoE Subscriptions – Subscribe NOW for 2019/20

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.