

Reading Friends of the Earth



Newsletter May – June 2020

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 in the days of covid-19:

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. **but not for the foreseeable future**. Most meetings include discussion of general topics – some have a particular focus or guest speakers. Meetings are open to all.

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

Repair Cafe – usually third weekend of month - seems to be continuing but check on their website – <http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/projects/reading-repair-cafe/>

Reading Bicycle Kitchen – regular sessions at the Queens Arms – **but currently cancelled** – see <http://www.readingbicyclekitchen.org/>

Green Drinks at RISC – usually on the first Tuesday of every month – **but closed until further notice** - see. <http://www.greendrinks.org/berkshire/reading>

Instead of face-to-face meetings there are many webinars, Zoom meetings etc.

Friends of the Earth:

Climate Action webinars: <https://act.friendsoftheearth.uk/act/register-webinar> 11th and 26th May – ‘Campaigning in context of Coronavirus’

12th May 8 pm ‘Live Chat’ FoE staff discussing legal success against a third runway at Heathrow. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDKE7sfbAzw&feature=youtu.be>

Ethical Reading:

May 15th 13:00. Performance and Productivity – Chasing the false God <https://www.ethicalreading.org.uk/event/webinar-performance-and-productivity-chasing-the-false-god/>

IEMA (Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment):

Offers many webinars including 20th May - ‘Carbon offsetting and climate neutrality – background and developments’; 22nd May – ‘#Buildbackbetter’; and 28th May - ‘The Environment Bill – overview, improvement etc.’ For a full list and to book (free) go to <https://www.iema.net/events> and set filter to ‘Non Member’.

A couple of opportunities to help with wildlife research and recording suggested by Tricia Marcouse:

"No Mow May":

"No Mow May" project with Plantlife is a follow-on from their pollinator plants in grass verges project from last year. If you are willing to stop mowing on the first of May and let the vegetation grow then Plantlife would love you to survey a metre square of your lawn later on in May.

<https://www.plantlife.org.uk/everflowercounts/>

Swifts:

Swifts in Reading. Each year the RSPB asks for records of swift nest sites and observations across the UK to update the records that feed into planning applications to keep swifts safer. Many of the regular recorders are keeping closer to home this year so PLEASE, if you hear swifts screaming whilst going on your daily walk, make a note of the building they seem to be circulating and log it onto the RSPB swift survey site. It only takes a jiffy.

<https://www.swiftmapper.org.uk> is the data entry site. Put in your postcode and see where swifts have been seen near you!



Get Your MoneyOut! #1 Heathrow – again!

Heathrow Airport Limited and developers Arora Holdings have just been given permission to appeal in the Supreme Court against the decision to stop them building a climate-wrecking third runway. So FoE are appealing for funds: <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change/heathrow-third-runway-friends-earth-challenge-developers-supreme-court-appeal>

Get Your MoneyOut! #2 Road Investment Strategy

After FoE's legal victory requiring Ministers to take account of carbon implications of airport expansion Transport Action Network want to challenge the government's Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2), published on 11 March alongside the Budget. Ministers described it as England's "largest ever" road-building programme. RIS2 involves spending £27.4 billion by 2025 on thousands of miles of roads from Cornwall to Northumberland - at a time of climate and ecological emergency. Transport Action Network say they need funds by mid-May for a Judicial Review. <https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/stop-largest-ever-roads-programme/>

FoE Petition: "NO TO TRUMP'S TOXIC TRADE DEAL"

While the world's attention is focused on the pandemic, Donald Trump wants to push us into a toxic trade deal. But a US trade deal could harm nature and the climate, especially if rushed.

"Over 40,000 of you have asked UK Trade Secretary Liz Truss to halt the trade negotiations and tell the US that our health and environment come first. Can you help us reach 50,000?"

<https://act.friendsoftheearth.uk/act/tell-government-not-chase-trump-toxic-trade-deal>

Thames Valley Park Park & Ride – what will buses cost?

Almost 3 years since Wokingham gave planning permission for this P&R at the end of the A5290 to the east of Kennetmouth it's now been built at a cost originally estimated at around £3.6 million - but there is no bus service yet!

The idea was that the shuttle buses that already run between Thames Valley Park and central Reading would be used in return for a fee, but now Thames Valley Park are asking for more money so Wokingham (who will run the P&R) are putting the contract out to tender. <https://www.bracknellnews.co.uk/news/18409087.delays-new-park-ride-bus-thames-valley-park/>

The scheme – built on an area of woodland, scrub and grassland - was opposed by SOAR and many local people on grounds of loss of amenity, loss of wildlife habitat, and transport implications (people driving to the car park instead of taking public transport to/from their homes). The scheme only has 258 parking places so will have little effect on congestion – and if the cost of bus service rises then it may not even be fully used.

SOAR (who went on to successfully oppose the East Reading Mass Rapid Transit with Reading FoE support) have released a short video showing how they argued that the decision to invest public money taken in 2017 was flawed:

<https://saveourancientriverside.co.uk/latest-news/more-costs-and-delays-for-the-park-and-no-ride-at-thames-valley-park/>

Transport for the South East – net zero carbon by 2050 not good enough.

Reading Cllr. Tony Page is deputy chair of the board of this group which wants to become a 'statutory sub-national transport body' to bring together 16 local transport authorities, five local enterprise partnerships, and other key stakeholders to speak with one voice on the region's strategic transport needs. <https://transportforthesoutheast.org.uk/>

Reading FoE responded http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Documents/TfSE_Consultation.pdf in January to TfSE's consultation on its Draft Strategy and with many other groups called for net zero carbon emissions by 2040 and traffic reduction etc. Cllr. Page agreed to meet us but we didn't get around to it because of Covid-19.

It was reported that at TfSE meeting on 23rd April Cllr. Page (on behalf of Berkshire Councils) was one of two main speakers calling for more weight to be given to environmental issues. But the meeting approved the draft Transport Strategy (including carbon emissions to net zero by 2050, at the latest) subject to formal approval in July.

Following further exchange of letters with FoE SE campaigner Brenda Pollack – forwarded to us by Cllr. Page – it emerges that work is now underway on a quantitative approach to assess the carbon reduction impacts of the Strategy and forthcoming area studies but the 2050 net zero target formally remains.

Reading Consultations:

Please share your opinions on these documents by e-mail and/or Facebook. We should aim to create a formal response on behalf of Reading FoE with lots of individual responses as well.

Reading Borough Council Transport Strategy 2036:

Consultation will now run to 30th August. <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/dens/reading-transport-strategy-2036/>

There are lots of ambitious words including

- "Demand management schemes, will be an essential element of this overall strategy."
- "We have pledged to aim for a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. ... we call on the Government to accept moral and ethical responsibilities and to give Reading the additional powers and funding needed to help us achieve our goal."
- "Due to key challenges including the declared climate emergency, car emissions causing poor air quality and the forecast levels of growth increasing future demand for travel, continuing with the status quo is not an option."

But the projected outcomes – see Section 9.4 ‘Performance Indicators’ - seem lacking or disappointing:

- car trips to, from and through the town centre will only be reduced by 20% in 15 years.
- cycling will increase by a mere 10% while the population of the borough is expected to grow by 8.7%
- carbon emissions from road transport down by 50% by 2036.
- no indicators for time lost to congestion or air quality.
- and there is a plan for a North Reading Orbital Route linking A4074 to A4155 (Woodcote and Henley Roads) as well as a third Thames Bridge when we expect new roads to encourage car use.

Reading Climate Change Partnership – Reading Climate Emergency Strategy:

RBC is part of the partnership but is not necessarily bound to the strategy.

The vision for 2025 is for a Reading which is working rapidly towards:

- net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and
- being resilient to the impacts of a changing climate.

Consultation period extended to 31st May – see <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/dens/reading-climate-emergency-strategy/> .

The **Reading Tree Strategy** and the **Biodiversity Action Plan** did not go out for public consultation when expected in March and we are still waiting for a date for consultations to start.

COP26 Postponed:

Alok Sharma – MP for Reading West - has been appointed President of COP26 (the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change). This was to have been in Glasgow in November 2020 but has now been postponed. Revised plans for the conference are promised ‘in due course’.

A preliminary meeting between ministers and representatives – ‘Petersburg Climate Dialogue’ – was held by video call on April 28th. Mr. Sharma said “we have defined a number of key themes for COP26, which include transition to clean energy, clean transport, nature based solutions, adaptation and resilience and of course bringing it all together, finance.” And “This does mean more ambition to reduce emissions, more ambition to build resilience, and more ambition to cooperate with each other, as we have done and shown today.”

A 6-minute summary video is at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/petersberg-climate-dialogue-summary-video>
Comments from FoE Scotland at <https://foe.scot/campaign/climate-action/un-climate-summit-glasgow-2020-cop26/>

Global Water Shortage for Irrigation Predicted:

Experts, including a Reading-based academic, believe that far more water is likely to be required globally for irrigation than allowed for in current models. They say that irrigating up to 1.8 billion hectares could be required by 2050 rather than the 240 to 450 million hectares currently assumed. This will impact climate change and other resource consumption. <https://eandt.theiet.org/content/articles/2020/05/expansion-of-irrigation-to-cater-to-future-population-greatly-underestimated/>

Insufferable heat expected if global average temperatures rise by 3°C:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/05/one-billion-people-will-live-in-insufferable-heat-within-50-years-study>

Planet of the Humans:

This film - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zk11vl-7czE> - produced by Michael Moore – is critical of the mainstream environmental movement proposing technical solutions saying “Removed from the debate is the only thing that MIGHT save us: getting a grip on our out-of-control human presence and consumption.”

If you watch it be aware it has very distressing images of Orangutans at the end and has been widely criticised for biased and/or out-dated information on renewable energy – e.g. by George Monbiot

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/may/07/michael-moore-far-right-climate-crisis-deniers-film-environment-falsehoods> and Mark Lynas

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ScienceForSustainability/search/?query=Moore&epa>

Further Reading:

Government Transport Decarbonisation Plan:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creating-the-transport-decarbonisation-plan>.

Carbon Tax Implications:

<https://www.cccep.ac.uk/publication/distributional-impacts-of-a-carbon-tax-in-the-uk/>

Cambridge Prof's plan for zero Carbon Britain

<http://www.ukfires.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Absolute-Zero-online.pdf>

Climate Friendly Local Authorities:

FoE has released an updated version of its comparison tool which summarised progress and targets for every local authority. The original versions left a lot to be desired but were good start to get the scale of changes required. See

<https://takeclimateaction.uk/climate-action/how-climate-friendly-your-area>

Useful Links and General Information:

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

– Policy and Insight <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/>

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

Reading Climate Action Network - <https://readingcan.org.uk>

Extinction Rebellion, Reading: <https://www.facebook.com/xrReading/>

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

Our 2020 AGM scheduled for April 8th was postponed so Enrico Petrucco and John Booth will continue in the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively until a meeting can be convened.

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 2020/21

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.