

Reading Friends of the Earth



Newsletter May-June 2022

For more info: www.readingfoe.org.uk ... or Twitter @ReadingFOE ... or Facebook [Reading Friends of the Earth | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ReadingFriendsOfTheEarth/) ... or email info@readingfoe.org.uk ... or 'phone 07503626167.

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. Access from London Street is via passage to the right of the shop-front. Most meetings will be 'hybrid' using Zoom. Please request a Zoom link if you have not received one. Most meetings discuss plans and general topics. Some have a particular focus or guest speakers. Meetings are open to all. If in doubt check our website www.readingfoe.org.uk or phone or e-mail for confirmation (contacts above).

Wednesday May 11th: 8:00 pm. Topics to include discussion of and responses to:

- Reading's Bus Service Improvement Plan [Reading Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021-26](https://www.readingfoe.org.uk/reading-bus-service-improvement-plan-2021-26)
- Burghfield Incinerator (meeting with local campaigner Alison May) which is expected to go to West Berkshire Planning on 1st June (see our objection on www.readingfoe.org.uk and UKWIN's comments and objection at <https://ukwin.org.uk/incinerators/library/West+Berkshire/282>)
- Proposals for solar farm at Bloomfield Hatch – see below.

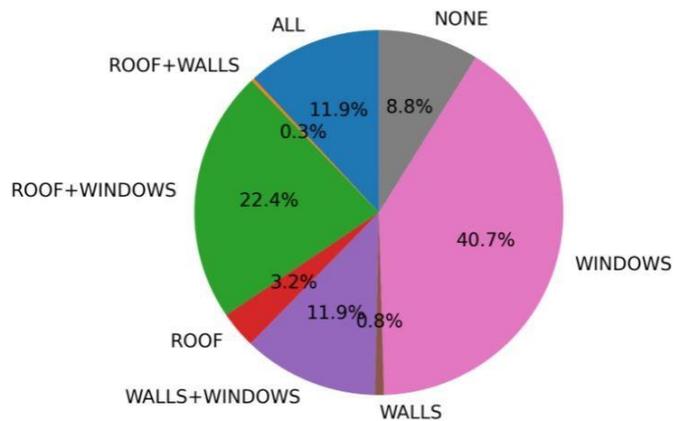
Wednesday June 8th: General meeting. Check for updates on www.readingfoe.org.uk

Alok Sharma - Stop Cumbrian Mine! Appeal delivered 11th March



Energy Performance Certificate Analysis Opportunities to save money, energy and the planet.

Insulation in Reading houses



Details on next pages ->

Other Future Activities with Reading FoE:

Wednesday 1st June: West Berkshire Planning Committee may discuss **Burghfield Incinerator?** Newbury 18:30. Provisional - to be confirmed – we may decide to go to object on the day and/or do something on 21st or 28th May?

Saturday 4th June: Let us know if you can help on our **Waterfest** stall in Chestnut Walk, Reading – 11:00 to 17:00. Intend to run workshops on heat pumps as well as covering Air Quality, Climate Change etc.

Sunday 26th June: Help also needed on our stall at **East Reading Festival** in Palmer Park from 12:00 to 18:00.

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

Reading Cycle Campaign – has regular monthly meetings and other activities. <https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/>

Repair Cafe – usually third weekend of month - check on their website for times and locations
<http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/projects/reading-repair-cafe/>

Reading Bicycle Kitchen – regular sessions at Unit C10, Weldale Street, RG1 7BX
– see [Reading Bicycle Kitchen](#)

Green Drinks – usually on the first Tuesday of every month – see [Reading Green Drinks | Facebook](#)

Burghfield Incinerator:

We have submitted two objections to this long-standing planning application from J Mould for an incinerator that seems intended to burn a lot of plastic waste. This would increase West Berkshire's CO2 emissions by about 12%. Graham submitted an objection for us in June 2021 covering a range of grounds. Enrico drafted our second objection in January 2021 that pointed out that plastics recycling has already advanced beyond the need for new incinerators to manage plastic waste and argued that planning in the Berkshire area should decline consent.

Alison May – who has been campaigning on this with RATI (Reading Against the Incinerator) – alerted us to this in spring last year and wrote an article for our May 2021 Newsletter. She hopes to join us at our May 2022 meeting to discuss how best to put a stop to this when it goes to the Planning Committee on 1st June. She has written to The Secretary of State asking him to 'call it in' on the grounds that it is not a local issue. (See links on previous page) .

Bloomfield Hatch Solar Farm:

This is a proposal from West Berkshire Council to give itself planning permission for 30 years for a Solar Farm (76.2 Acres, 26.65 MWp, claimed to be sufficient to supply electricity for 7,828 average homes) on agricultural land between Grazeley Green and Mortimer that it owns. Graham was positively impressed at a briefing event run by agents Horizon Energy and Power and reported:

“The tenant farmer has been there since about 1986. He has cattle on the bits that would be solar panels but he does shift them on to another field so they have somewhere to go. We asked about the possibility of having sheep graze between the panels and Horizon were keen on that but the farmer does not want to do sheep. He wants to continue to live there and farm in the vicinity.

“Horizon's biodiversity person said she wants to get more diverse plants (and therefore birds, insects etc) than exist where cattle currently graze and would like to seed between the solar panels to assist this.”

The present consultation runs until 6th May and is at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/G2FYZ8P> It asks some fairly simple questions and allows the response 'not sure' to the question of whether the application is favoured. There will be a further consultation opportunity when the planning application goes in.

FoE has recommended that as well as a group response (if we can agree one) it is good to get members and others to submit short personal emails/letters too, particularly at the formal planning consultation stage. They also supplied these links: <https://www.bre.co.uk/filelibrary/pdf/Brochures/NSC-Biodiversity-Guidance.pdf> and <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/positions/climate-change/solar-power-briefing--may-2017-update-revised.pdf> Please let us have your views as well.

Energy Performance Certificate Analysis:

Paolo has conducted a study for Reading FoE on the current state of Reading properties, based on their EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) data.

The EPC data for every property estimates the current energy consumption and the potential energy consumption achievable once the property is improved to a certain standard (e.g. by using low energy light bulbs, insulating external walls etc.). Based on April 2022 tariffs the current cost of annual energy consumption for heating is £135.8M and could drop to £92.3M, a reduction of £43 million or 32%.

Data on thermal insulation is present in the EPC database in the form of three main elements: walls, roof and windows. The pie chart above shows that roughly 9 in 10 properties in Reading have some level of insulation (mostly windows insulation), whilst only about 1 in 10 properties is fully insulated.

Paolo has modelled the impact of improved insulation on home heating bills at current energy prices. The table below gives estimated annual bills for a 1-bedroom flat and a 4-bedroom detached house with gas-fired heating at current prices.

Annual energy bill (gas) (% wrt no insulation)	No insulation	Windows insulation	Windows and roof insulation	Full insulation
1-bedroom flat, floor area 40m ²	£ 1071.88	£ 713.38 (-33%)	£ 585.73 (-45%)	£ 250.75 (-77%)
4-bedroom, detached house, floor area 105m ²	£ 3083.91	£ 1635.87 (-47%)	£ 1524.10 (-51%)	£ 553.43 (-82%)

We hope to put out a Press Release on this after the election to encourage insulation for people and planet.

Lilly May Court:

This is a block of flats in Woodley (Wokingham Borough) where residents say they are adversely affected by noise and air pollution from an adjacent haulage yard. They contacted us in 2021 and we gave them advice. We were asked not to make the issues public in the hope that resolution could be reached. Residents have now gone public with assistance of a Labour Councillor and their MP. ([Mum claims son struggles to breathe properly after flat developer 'broke ventilation promises' | ITV News Meridian](#)). More media coverage on BBC TV is expected very soon.

While the developers say they will implement outstanding ventilation measures to address the noise issues there does not seem to be any prospect of progress on air quality which seems to have been ignored when planning permission was given. So the residents would like to sell back their properties and are looking for funds to afford legal advice. We have offered to review any air quality data or measurement proposals that the local authority comes up with. Any other ideas or advice would be welcome.

Air Quality Mapping:

The World Health Organisation reduced (i.e. tightened) its guidelines for clean air for various pollutants last September. <https://www.breeze-technologies.de/blog/new-2021-who-air-quality-guideline-limits/> . The UK has not yet updated its guidelines https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/assets/documents/Air_Quality_Objectives_Update.pdf

Last week there was press coverage over new air quality mapping based on a 20 metres squared resolution national model of air pollution generated by Imperial College London – Reading is among the towns and cities with the highest proportion of homes in the top 10% most polluted nationally:

[97% of UK addresses breach at least one WHO limit for air pollution - AirQualityNews](#)

This link www.addresspollution.org allows you to get an estimate of overall air quality for your postcode and address. The first number is an overall percentile ranking based on levels of three pollutants relative to the levels at every other address in the UK. Then scroll down to 'LEVELS AND HEALTH EFFECTS' for numerical values of pollutant concentrations. {Note: microgrammes may be abbreviated as mcg or ug}

A building near Reading Council's offices (postcode RG1 2LU) is in the 90th percentile of all UK addresses:

- The annual average for PM2.5 is 13.04mcg/m³. The World Health Organization limit is 5mcg/m³.
- The reading for PM10 at this address is 19.64mcg/m³. The limit is 15mcg/m³.
- The reading for N02 at this address is 23.62mcg/m³. The limit is 10mcg/m³.

Please respond to Environment Act Targets consultation:

The Act and the 'Nature Recovery Green Paper' address waste, air pollution, water pollution, and nature's decline. FoE has many criticisms of the detail that is already out there and would like people to take part in the consultation on targets that are to be set soon.

- **Office for Environmental Protections:** The 'Watchdog' is not sufficiently independent of government.
- **Wildlife Species Abundance:** Government expects species decline to continue until 2030, followed by a slow recovery. At best wildlife targets for 2042 will be back at 2022 levels.
- **Air Quality:** Micro-particles PM2.5 targeted to be at 10 ug/m³ by 2040. Too late! People are dying and WHO guideline level is 5 ug/m³.
- **Water Quality:** no target for the *quality* of rivers and streams – just to reduce pollution from agriculture and water industry.
- **Condition of Protected Habitats:** No target for habitats on land. Sites of Special Scientific Interest must be required to be in good condition.
- **Plastics:** Strong focus on improving recycling but no target to reduce all types of plastic pollution such as microplastics.

For FoE's guidance on how to respond and comments in detail go to [Have your say on the Environment Act targets consultation | Friends of the Earth](#). Consultation closes on 27th June.

4,500 Homes and maybe a new M4 Junction for Hall Farm:

Objectors to greenfield development on UoR land south of Earley presented an 'Alternative Strategy for Hall Farm' https://www.green4grow.org/files/ugd/7f3f74_0439ef53cdac490e8e514cb2b001a991.pdf to the UoR on Saturday 30th April during a strong demonstration at the Shinfield Road entrance to the University.



Students of the University in particular wanted to know more and many expressed surprise and concern that the University, which prides itself on being "[the most Environmentally friendly university in the U.K.](#)" would be prepared to do this to a site with important biodiversity, heritage and landscape value.

Wokingham's 'Draft Local Plan' to 2038 is driven by central government housing targets for local authorities. We must ask how much more housing is good for sustainability in central Berkshire, and in particular in south-west Wokingham where Arborfield Garrison is being developed? Is Hall Farm the right housing in the right place?

Hall Farm will provide 4,500 homes when it is argued that only about 2,000 more are needed to comply with government targets. If the targets cannot be reduced there are two major alternative sites but both are greenfield:

- Ashridge: To the east of Junction 10 of the M4 – scope for 3,000 homes. See from page 32 in 'Ashridge Housing Proposal' at <https://www.green4grow.org/downloads> For 2018 report to WBC comparing Ashridge and Hall Farm search www.wokingham.gov.uk for 'growth scenarios hall farm ashridge'
- Twyford Gardens: To the east of Twyford – promises around 2,500 new homes – see www.twyfordgardens.co.uk

To follow this campaign by 'SOLVE Hall Farm' see <https://www.green4grow.org/>

Retrofit in Reading:

Reading Borough Council has agreed a programme for property improvement works and thermal efficiency upgrades including External Wall Insulation and Air Source Heat Pumps to 31 RBC properties in Tilehurst [KEN - 220190 - Bramshaw Road.pdf \(reading.gov.uk\)](#).

This certainly looks like a welcome initiative. Would be good to find out more of the analysis behind it: the choice between Air Source and Ground Source Heat Pumps (the latter are generally more efficient and can reduce peak electricity demand on very cold days); and the choice of levels of insulation for retrofit.

FoE Criticise Government's Energy Efficiency plans:

FoE action in the High Court has led to government review of impact of its energy efficiency plan on poor households. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/03/government-to-consider-impact-of-energy-efficiency-plan-on-poor-households>. See also <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/energy-security-strategy-reaction>

Active travel in Reading: Sustrans is working with RBC to understand the barriers to walking and cycling in the Reading area. Please respond to survey which closes on 19th May. [Active Travel Reading \(onlinesurveys.ac.uk\)](https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/active-travel-reading)

Reading Ranked High on Transport:

[Reading ranked third highest performing council in national highways and transport survey - Reading Borough Council](#)

Recent Past Activities:

Green Park: Reading's New Station / For People & Environment

Our open meeting on March 9th with Edward Goose (Regional Growth Manager (East) | Great Western Railway) and Cllr. Tony Page speaking for RBC was positive and encouraging that at last this new station, built with £20 million funding via RBC, is expected to open in late summer.

Journey times 6 minutes to Reading and 20 minutes to Basingstoke. Disappointing that there will only be two trains per hour in each direction (at least initially).

Edward Goose said that the government has committed to the removal of all Diesel-only rolling stock by 2040. GWR are trialling a rapid charging battery train trial towards decarbonising branch lines not suitable for electrification.

Our Press Release was picked up by Radio Berkshire and Graham gave a good interview to an afternoon broadcast.

Stop the Cumbria Coal Mine:

We delivered a custom version of FoE's template letter - about the proposal to open a new mine near Whitehaven in Cumbria for 'coking coal' to make steel - to Alok Sharma's office – see photos on front page.

No local media picked up our Press Release and we've had no response from the COP26 President. But we did get a response from The Planning Inspectorate saying that all the arguments about the application will be fully taken into account by the Inspector and Secretary of State who would get a copy of our letter so at least it got through.

National FoE petition is still 'live' <https://act.friendsoftheearth.uk/petition/stop-plans-coal-mine-cumbria> . Decision expected on or before 7th July. Environmental groups have pointed out that it will not replace coal currently imported from Russia. <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/green-ngos-urge-michael-gove-reject-whitehaven-mine>

Community Consultation for Quality of Life (CCQoL):

This was a research project to investigate how to gather people's ideas about Quality of Life in their community – run by UoR and other academic establishments. We planned to run two sessions – 'Air Quality' on March 12th and 'Warm Homes' on March 26th – in their 'Urban Room' (a former shop in the north-west end of Broad Street Mall).

UoR cancelled the first because of staff health and we and/or they proved very ineffective at getting interest in Insulation from busy shoppers on Saturday morning on 26th, but we did have good discussions among ourselves.

Beanpole Day:

Our first open-air stall of the year at Caversham Court Gardens on April 23rd was busy with a steady stream of old friends and new faces. Our stall featured both Paolo's EPC analysis and concerns about development at Hall Farm – both of which attracted interest and discussion.

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/>

Reading FoE Officers etc.

Our 2022 AGM on April 13th elected Enrico Petrucco and John Booth to continue in the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively. A new Constitution for the group was adopted.

Reading FoE e-mail communications

If you would like to become a supporter on our mailing list and receive and join in our day-to-day communications please send an email to info@readingfoe.org.uk to request our GDPR Consent form. We have separate lists for people who only want to receive our newsletter (currently 6 per year) and information about important events and actions, and for people who want to be more involved and communicate directly with other active supporters.

Reading FoE Subscriptions – Subscribe NOW for 2022/23

A donation would be welcome from members but is not required. We're much happier to have an extra pair of hands doing the important stuff. To join or renew, just fill in the slip below and send it off with or without 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 registration 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 (if any) payable to Reading Friends of the Earth, and return to the Reading FoE Treasurer, c/o 27 Instow Road, Earley, Reading RG6 5QH. Alternatively request our bank account details.