

# Reading Friends of the Earth Newsletter Nov/Dec 2015



For more information: <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading> or [www.readingfoe.org.uk](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk)  
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## Diary:

**General Meetings:** Reading FoE usually meets on the **second Wednesday of each month** upstairs in Room 1 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.

**November 11th** - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – discussing 'Smart M4', road pricing, climate change marches, Bees and neonicotinoids, Feed-in Tariffs, and anything else we can think of.

**December 9th** - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – discussion of current campaign areas – and part of the evening will focus on 'Extreme Events' with a visiting expert.

## Other Activities with Reading FoE:

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November – Smart M4 Open Floor Hearing** – 6:30 for 7:00 pm at Wycliffe Baptist Church – see below.

## Other Activities (not run by Reading FoE):

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November** – IET meeting on **Thames Tideway Tunnel** – 19:00 for 19:30 at UoR – more details and register on the link at <http://www.theiet.org/events/local/224529.cfm>

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November** – The final **Repair Cafe** of 2015. Including a workshop on damp and draught proofing your home at 2pm. Jackson's Corner 12:00 to 15:30. <https://www.facebook.com/events/597028620437933/>

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November – This Changes Everything** film show at RISC featuring Naomi Klein – not sure of time and cost – see <http://readingpeoplesmarch.org/> for final details nearer the time.

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> November – GREN AGM**– 7:30 at RISC – [www.gren.org.uk](http://www.gren.org.uk)

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> November** – Global Justice Now – '**Action on Climate Change**' – 7:30 at RISC

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> November – Reading People's March for Climate, Justice and Jobs** – final details not yet available – probably end with a rally in Reading - check <http://readingpeoplesmarch.org/> for final plans.

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November – March for Climate, Justice and Jobs - London** – details <http://www.timetoact2015.org/> – check <http://readingpeoplesmarch.org/> or [www.gren.org.uk](http://www.gren.org.uk) for low-cost transport options nearer the time.

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December – Reading Climate Day** – intended as the Reading Deanery's response to COP21. The idea is to demonstrate that the church sees creation care as a spiritual imperative, and to add our voices to those who are pressing for robust action to tackle climate change. <https://www.facebook.com/Reading-Climate-Day-900189480034621/?fref=ts>

**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>

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## Climate Change

Climate change is high on the agenda as we approach the 'Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change' in Paris in December – COP21. Professor Richard P. Allan of the University of Reading gave an excellent presentation at the meeting we sponsored on 26<sup>th</sup> October in the Reading International Festival series.

He confirmed that global warming was continuing and said that 'greenhouse gases' from human activity were now an important driver of the warming process. Global surface temperatures had been on a rapid rising trend for the last hundred years and 1983 to 2013 was probably the warmest 30-year period for the last 1,400 years based on northern hemisphere measurements. Temperatures could well rise beyond the range to which people, and the ecosystems on which we depend, are best adapted.

In considering the evidence – and the arguments of ‘climate change sceptics’ - context and timescale were very important. He explained that many natural factors had influenced climate over geological time and in pre-history and had caused natural changes in ‘greenhouse gases’ in the atmosphere.

Since industrialisation the concentration of carbon dioxide had increased by about 40% - largely caused by human use of fossil fuels - and today is higher than at any time in last 800,000 years, and is still rising. Computer simulations showed that recent warming could only be explained when both man-made and natural factors are included. The observed ‘hiatus’ – the recent slowing of the rate of rise of surface temperatures – could be accounted for by changes in deep ocean currents and other natural phenomena (see Slide 25 in presentation).

He said that substantial changes in global temperature and rainfall patterns are projected over this century based on the latest scientific evidence. The scale of change will depend on success in reducing fossil fuel use and curbing emissions of other greenhouse gases.

Professor Allan’s slides are available at

[http://www.met.rdg.ac.uk/~sgs02rpa/TALKS/ClimateChange\\_RISC2015\\_AllanRP.pdf](http://www.met.rdg.ac.uk/~sgs02rpa/TALKS/ClimateChange_RISC2015_AllanRP.pdf)

Professor Allan recommended a free on-line course from UoR "Our Changing Climate" starting in November 2015 – details and sign up here: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/our-changing-climate>

As well as the Reading and London marches listed in our ‘Diary’ Friends of the Earth and other organisations are encouraging people to go to Paris to demonstrate on 11<sup>th</sup> December. <https://www.foe.co.uk/page/paris-climate-change-talks-un-cop-21>

### **Bee Cause Update**

Tanja, Steve and Michael did great work in ‘Bee Cause’ T-shirts, wings and antennae on our stall at the **Town Meal** on 3<sup>rd</sup> October. They collected over 80 signatures on a petition to MPs calling for the current ban on neonicotinoid insecticides to be maintained and expanded to all crops.

Nationally FoE is seeking Judicial Review of the Government’s decision to allow bee-harming pesticides back into (some) English fields this autumn. It allowed seeds treated with two neonicotinoid pesticides – currently banned by the EU – to be planted in parts of England this autumn. This application for Judicial Review will go to the High Court on 5<sup>th</sup> November – for more detail see <https://www.foe.co.uk/blog/why-are-we-taking-government-court> .

FoE has also released two new resources for the campaign:

- The first is a list of **Bee Friendly Plants**, designed by Manchester Friends of the Earth <https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/bee-friendly-plants-list-88772.pdf>
- The second is a 2 sided **introduction to the impact of neonicotinoids on bee decline**. <https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/bees-threat-from-neonicotinoid-pesticides-89431.pdf>

### **Traffic Growth on the M4 – Save the hard shoulder from J3 to J12! – Save the money!**

Highways England is planning to spend nearly a billion pounds widening the M4 by using the hard shoulder for ‘all lane running’ (requiring 11 bridges to be replaced) and converting it to a ‘Smart Motorway’. The planned work would take place between junction 3 in London and junction 12, just west of Reading. The formal ‘Examination’ of the proposals runs to March 2016.

Friends of the Earth and Campaign for Better Transport are submitting evidence on air quality, climate change, and safety issues, arguing that, while a ‘managed motorway’ should be beneficial, increasing capacity by ‘all lane running’ without a hard shoulder is not justified.

Detailed arguments and evidence were submitted in writing on or before 8th October by many parties to the Examination – and are accessible via the Examination page – please take a look – links from <http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/m4>

Reading Borough Council in its [submission](#) supports our concerns over safety and congestion and traffic generation with all lane running – but advocates consideration of full widening with a new hard shoulder – essentially ‘predict and provide’. Their submission is useful in that it supports our argument that alternative options have not been considered and it contains horrifying accounts of major problems when all-lane running has been implemented and evidence of reducing volumes of traffic in recent years. It does not comment on climate change or air quality but does ask for more information on projected traffic flows on Reading’s roads which are already designated an Air Quality Management Area.

## **Energy and Climate and Run on Sun**

On 27<sup>th</sup> August the government opened a consultation on massive cuts to the PV Feed in Tariff to take effect from the end of the year:

- For domestic scale up to 4 kWp from 12.47 pence per kWh to 1.63 pence per kWh
- For school and community scale up to 50 kWp from 11.3 pence per kWh to 3.69 pence per kWh

A number of solar firms have collapsed or withdrawn from the UK but Berkshire Energy Pioneers and RBC staff (for Reading Climate Change Partnership) have made great efforts to sign up community buildings to 'pre-register' so that installations in 2016 would still get the present rates.

Then, in late October, the Treasury removed tax reliefs of 30% or more for community energy schemes that had reduced the risk for investors and encouraged private capital to help build new energy capacity. It is not yet certain what effect this will have on local schemes and FoE's 'Run on Sun' campaign for solar schools.

Nationally FoE and other organisations have been campaigning to save the Feed In Tariff. Campaigner Henry Chown's blog <https://www.foe.co.uk/blog/pressure-grows-government-save-solar-industry> says:

"The world is starting to notice. Negotiators in the current climate talks in Bonn are baffled by the UK's change in direction. The UN's Chief Environmental scientist Prof Jacqui McGlade recently described the government's proposals as perverse. Here's what she said in full:

- "What's disappointing is when we see countries such as the United Kingdom that have really been in the lead in terms of getting their renewable energy up and going - we see subsidies being withdrawn and the fossil fuel industry being enhanced. It's a very serious signal - a very perverse signal that we do not want to create."

There is an action on the national FoE website for people to email their MP about the FiT review - <https://www.foe.co.uk/act/help-fergal-saveoursolar>

## **East Reading Park and Ride**

In Wokingham both Mere oak and Winnersh Triangle park and ride sites – to serve Reading - are now open <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/transport/parking/parkandride/> and now two public consultation events are to look at Wokingham Borough Council's £3.6million proposals to build a new park and ride (P&R) at Thames Valley Park (TVP) east of Reading – i.e. at 'Broken Brow' very close to the Thames.

The exhibition exploring the plans is being held at the Wokingham Waterside Centre, Thames Valley Park Drive, Berkshire, RG6 1PQ on Wednesday 4 November, from 3 to 6pm and Thursday 12 November, noon to 3pm. General public are welcome alongside business park workers.

Park and Ride at Broken Brow would certainly result in some loss of green space between the Thames and the railway. It would add to pressure for the 'Eastern Expressway' to bridge Kennet Mouth which would be a major loss of amenity and heritage for Newtown.

In 2013 Wokingham's draft Park and Ride Strategy said "There is not sufficient existing demand on the A4 for a dedicated Park and Ride service" and sees Broken Brow as providing capacity for traffic from the A329(M). But there are a variety of potential rail and bus routes from both these directions which would avoid more cars travelling as far towards Reading as the Sutton Seeds roundabout, and potentially increasing congestion on the A329.

The draft strategy said that "persuading people to replace their complete car trips by the use of public transport would have the greatest impact on reducing congestion and pollution." Broken Brow is proposed as part of Wokingham's answer to the transport problems arising from the massive green-field housing development resulting from the Labour government's 'South East Plan'. The new housing estates will be big enough to support good conventional bus services so people can 'walk and ride' and do the long leg of their journey by bus instead of driving to a Park and Ride site and then taking a short bus trip to a town centre.

Some of the disadvantages of Park and Ride are: public money spent on it is not available for other purposes; its use will reduce the patronage of conventional bus services leading to higher fares and/or worse services; it is useless for people who are unable to drive through age or ill-health; it is useless for people who do not have access to a car; if shuttle buses are used throughout the day they are often very low-occupancy when they are both environmentally and economically very costly.

Reading Green Party is opposed to the proposal <http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/reading-berkshire-news/thames-valley-park-park-ride-10369329> and Cllr. Rob White has launched a petition against it <https://www.change.org/p/no-park-and-ride-on-the-thameside> .

## 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](http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk)

True Food Co-op: [www.truefood.coop](http://www.truefood.coop) - shop in Emmer Green.

Citizens Committee on Oil Peak And Decline (COPAD) [www.copad.org](http://www.copad.org)

<http://www.fishonline.org/> gives info on over-fishing, fish to avoid, etc.

[www.ejfoundation.org](http://www.ejfoundation.org) (Environmental Justice Foundation)

RISC <http://www.risc.org.uk/readingfairtrade/>

## Reading FoE Officers

At our AGM on April 8<sup>th</sup> 2015 Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were 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](mailto: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 2015/16

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.