

# Reading Friends of the Earth

## Newsletter Nov/Dec 2017

For more information: <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading> or [www.readingfoe.org.uk](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk)  
email [info@readingfoe.org.uk](mailto: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.

**Wednesday November 8th** - 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting** – preparing to present Air Quality petition, and discussing points to make at Mass Rapid Transit public meeting.

**Wednesday December 13th** - 8:00 pm at RISC – **General meeting** – topics by e-mail later.

### Other Activities with Reading FoE:

**Saturday November 4th** – **Clean Air Petition in Broad Street** – Please offer to help (weather permitting) as we ask people to sign the petition. Probably from 10:30 to 12:30.

**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November** – **Clean Air Petition** presentation at SEPT Committee – 6:30 in Council Chamber.

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

**Reading 2050 'Place and Environment'** lectures on Energy, Transport and Climate/Flooding – 2/11/17 to 13/12/17  
[http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/architecture/B20021\\_Architecture\\_Reading\\_2050\\_poster\\_AWv3\\_WEBB.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/architecture/B20021_Architecture_Reading_2050_poster_AWv3_WEBB.pdf)

**Monday 6th November:** 19:30 at Function Room, Maiden Place Community Centre, Earley - **"Philosophy and the Planet - An Eco-philosophical Journey"** – Philosophy teacher **Tanja Rebel** will review how philosophers' approach to people and planet has changed down the centuries. Earley Environmental Group meeting.

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November** – 14:30 to 18:00 - Climate Justice Showcase at UoR - part of the ESRC Social Science Festival – free, booking required: <https://www.reading.ac.uk/climate-justice/lcjc-events.aspx>

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November** - 12:00 to 4:30 - **Repair Cafe** - The Oasis Centre, 21 Baker St, RG1 7XT  
[www.readingrepaircafe.org.uk](http://www.readingrepaircafe.org.uk) and <https://www.facebook.com/ReadingRepairCafe>

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> November:** 19:30 at RISC (entry from back) - **Ground source heat pumps** - realising the shallow geothermal resource of the Reading basin – presentation by Dr. Rayner Mayer to Reading Climate Forum meeting.

**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> November** – 7 pm at RISC – **Nuclear Awareness Group AGM** plus update from David Cullen of the Nuclear Information Service on AWE's new radioactive waste management plan.

**Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December** (tbc): - Debate on **East Reading Mass Rapid Transit** – Cllr. Tony Page and colleagues putting RBC's case, opposed by 'Save Our Ancient Riverside'. 'Big School' hall, Reading School, RG1 5LW at 7:30.

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> December** - **Oxford Green Fair** <https://www.facebook.com/events/120527545257124/>

**Reading Bicycle Kitchen** – has left Jackson's Corner but is now running frequent '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>

Reading Town Meal – 30<sup>th</sup> September



Clean Air petition in Broad Street – 21<sup>st</sup> October



### **Petition: 'Clean Air Everywhere – In Reading!'**

Enrico, Chris and Tony had a good discussion with RBC's Ross Jarvis in September – he was interested in our measurements showing high levels of NO<sub>2</sub> in various locations near the Station and in Oxford Road.

We launched our petition calling on Reading Borough Council to “**create a new air quality action plan with the resources to cut all pollutant levels to below World Health Organisation guidelines by 2020**” at the Town Meal, and followed this up with a Broad Street event on October 21<sup>st</sup> and publicity on Radio Berkshire on October 30<sup>th</sup>.

We now have over 170 signatures on this petition and would like many more people to sign it on-line at <https://tinyurl.com/cleanair4rdg> before we present it to the Council's 'Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee' on 22<sup>nd</sup> November. Please publicise it - see [www.readingfoe.org.uk](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk) for more information and posters etc. and Facebook entry at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/510395548980140/>

We would like the Council to get government funding to assess air quality in greater detail and to take action to reduce pollutants to well below the guidelines to reduce risk.

We are particularly concerned about **micro-particles PM2.5** which can get deep into the lungs and are not widely monitored. Reading's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment says a 2010 report based on 2008 data estimated there were 62 premature deaths in Reading per year due to particulates. Pollution from vehicles is most severe in the town centre but no-one is monitoring PM2.5 in enough places to know what is really going on.

Some of Reading's streets have been above the EU legal limit for **Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>)** since 2010 and the town centre and major roads are all designated an 'Air Quality Management Area'. The government says Reading is 'not required to conduct a feasibility study' to improve air quality although modelling predicts that Reading will barely meet the annual legal limit for NO<sub>2</sub> by 2020. Although NO<sub>2</sub> levels are falling and are predicted to continue to fall we think this is not soon enough or far enough - even if modelling is correct the legal limit is not a 'safe' threshold.

- The combined effects of particulates and NO<sub>x</sub> are estimated to cause 40,000-50,000 'attributable deaths' per year in the UK, roughly twice the figure due to alcohol. Particulate pollution alone is estimated to account for 340,000 'years of life' lost each year.
- Air pollution in the UK makes existing illnesses worse with over 100,000 cases of bronchitis in children under 12 and over 10,000 annual respiratory hospital admissions estimated each year.
- The annual cost of pollution is valued at £20 billion, and lost productivity is greater than 6,000,000 days of lost work valued at £2.7 billion.”

**SOAR! - Save Our Ancient Riverside** – Facebook at <https://en-gb.facebook.com/NoPaRThamesideWokingham/> : The East Reading campaign against Park and Ride (PNR) and Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) proposals around Kennet Mouth has been re-branded as 'Save Our Ancient Riverside'. The P&R already has approval and funding but the MRT has neither. See last newsletter [http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Documents/Newsletter/readingfoe\\_news\\_sep\\_17.pdf](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/Documents/Newsletter/readingfoe_news_sep_17.pdf)

**East Reading Mass Rapid Transit:** This bus and bike route would link the A329 to Vastern Road via a bridge over the Kennet and the Tesco store. Planning applications have gone in to Reading and Wokingham Councils so these are the next focus for action. It is not clear when they will go to Committee.

SOAR plans to hold a debate on the MRT scheme with Reading Borough Council (who are proposing the scheme) on 1<sup>st</sup> December at 7:30 pm in Reading School 'Big School' hall (Erleigh Road, Reading, RG1 5LW). It expected there will be a panel of three speakers on each side followed by discussion.

To see others' objections, and to make your own:

Wokingham: <http://planning.wokingham.gov.uk/FastWebPL/welcome.asp> use application number 172048

Reading: [http://planning.reading.gov.uk/fastweb\\_PL/welcome.asp](http://planning.reading.gov.uk/fastweb_PL/welcome.asp) . Use application number 171108.

It is encouraging that the Wildlife Trust submitted a serious objection on wildlife and biodiversity grounds (17<sup>th</sup> August on Reading's website), and the Environment Agency have objected on biodiversity and flooding (30<sup>th</sup> October). The RBC Transport Strategy response (17<sup>th</sup> August) calls for additional information to be provided to show that the proposal will reduce the traffic congestion in East Reading by between 1% and 3% across some of the eastern area roads as claimed. Concerns are being raised about the capacity of the Vastern Road/Napier Road roundabout which is said already to be a hotspot for accidents for cyclists.

### **Third Thames Bridge – 'New Thames Crossing':**

A 'Strategic Outline Business Case' for the Third Thames Bridge (from A329 to Caversham) has been published after a meeting held by Reading East MP Matt Rodda.

<http://news.wokingham.gov.uk/news/new-thames-crossing-strategic-outline-business-case/>

Three options are discussed: 2-lane road, 2-lane road with tolling, 2-lane road plus 2-lane bus lane - with cost estimates ranging from around £110 million to £166 million.

## **Fracking in the North:**

Steve recently supported the anti-fracking campaign in Lancashire and gave his comments to our October meeting.

Fracking Issues:

- Fracking for gas will impact climate change – fugitive methane from the wells, and CO2 when gas is burned.
- Local impacts include demand for water, disposal of contaminated water, lorry traffic and drilling rigs in fields.
- There have been bad reports from USA of poisoning water and land. UK risks are unknown but UK is smaller and more crowded.
- The quantity of recoverable gas may be quite small after all, but it will take 10 years to find out. Won't solve UK energy security problems because it will be sold on European market.
- Priority for expenditure should be energy saving, renewables etc. but contractors, lawyers and others are making money from exploration phase.
- It's good that Scotland and Wales have said 'no', but Government has over-ruled Lancashire who had refused permission.

Steve had joined lots of protesters in Lancashire lining an access road – which was enough to stop developers trying to get vehicles in – so the delaying tactic was working but may not be enough if protests do not continue.

The cost of policing was obviously high - the Lancashire constabulary has asked the Home Office for an extra £3.1m to cover the cost of police from Somerset and Wales – and it takes officers from important duties. Police actions were mis-judged and un-necessarily forceful. It seemed like intimidation, especially when cases were dropped at the last moment.

For several years the well-respected campaigning grandmother (and FOE award winner) Tina Rothery has been peacefully protesting at New Preston Road, where a large police presence is maintained, often by using officers from other areas of England and Wales (as experienced in the 1980's during the miner's strikes). She was recently arrested by an apparently unusually aggressively enthusiastic visitor, for obstructing the highway (she wasn't, as can be proved by visual and audio recordings made by others present) and for obstructing the police (again, she wasn't).

The day before her court hearing she was told that the case had not been dropped, so she left the Green Party conference inconveniently early and expensively to attend as instructed. Unsurprisingly, on arrival she was told by the CPS that they had dropped the case against her. Questions should be asked: why the CPS say they dropped the case; when they informed the court; why the prosecution was initially authorised; what grounds were claimed for a lawful arrest; and what action, if any, will now be taken to try to improve things.

If it's not already too late, we would all benefit from paying more attention both to the likes of those wise women and others being bullied by some less likeable bobbies, and to the more likeable heroic and hard-working bobbies and other essential public servants telling us why the many present crises are worsening and what could be done to provide more positive news.

## **Climate and Energy:**

In October the government launched its long-awaited '**Clean Growth Strategy**'

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-growth-strategy> The Executive Summary is a good read, as is the Carbon Brief critique <https://www.carbonbrief.org/in-depth-how-the-clean-growth-strategy-hopes-to-deliver-uk-climate-goals> which points out that this was supposed to be a 'plan' but has been issued as a less binding 'strategy'. Client Earth say that the strategy "fails to put us on track to meet legally binding emissions targets".

Professor Dieter Helm's '**Cost of Energy Review**' addresses electricity pricing

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/independent-review-on-cost-of-energy-published>

A Carbon Brief summary and critique of this is at <https://www.carbonbrief.org/reaction-dieter-helms-least-cost-ideas-for-meeting-the-uk-climate-targets>. One key recommendation (among many) from the review is to implement a new universal carbon price across the entire economy. The price would be varied so as to meet the carbon targets, but would be significantly lower than the cost of the current multiple interventions. Many commentators cast doubt on many of the recommendations.

## **Heathrow Expansion:**

The government is on track to publish final proposals for expansion at Heathrow in the first half of 2018 for a vote in Parliament. The public have until 19 December to consider and respond to new evidence in the [revised draft Airports National Policy Statement](#), including long term aviation forecasts.

The government says an expanded Heathrow Airport would be more accessible to the rest of the country thanks to HS2, Crossrail and at least 6 more domestic flight routes. There are expected to be: thousands of additional local jobs by 2030; an additional 260,000 flights a year, with an extra 16 million long haul seats for passengers travelling from UK airports in 2040.

If anyone wants a nightmare they can read Secretary of State Chris Grayling's views on sustainable growth of aviation <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/sustainable-growth-at-heart-of-future-strategy-for-uk-aviation>

## 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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](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 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.