

# Reading Friends of the Earth



## Newsletter November – December 2023

For more info: [www.readingfoe.org.uk](http://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](mailto:info@readingfoe.org.uk) ... or 'phone 07503626167.

\* Note: Our website <http://www.readingfoe.org.uk> is not secure and some browsers will not open it. We hope to change to a secure site either <https://www.readingfoe.org.uk> or <https://www.readingfoe.co.uk> soon so one of these may be worth a try.

**General Meetings:** Reading FoE usually meet on the **second Wednesday of each month** in Room 1 upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 7:30 p.m. Access to RISC 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. Meetings may cancel at short notice due to Covid or availability of group officers - if in doubt check our website [www.readingfoe.org.uk](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk) on the day or phone or e-mail for confirmation (contacts above).

**Wednesday November 8th:** Unfortunately Global Justice Reading have scheduled a meeting at RISC this evening (see below) so to avoid conflict of interest for mutual members we have cancelled our 'second Wednesday' RISC booking. Some of us plan to meet in person in the Calico Bar (next door) from 19:00 before going on to the GJN meeting.

**Wednesday December 13th:** 7:30 pm. General meeting at RISC and on Zoom. Topics to be confirmed.

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### Recent Activities

**19<sup>th</sup> September** – Tomiko and John ran a stall at a Reading University Community and Sustainability Fair. Talked with a number of new students.

**23<sup>rd</sup> September** – Thanks to Tricia Marcouse who took our 'Warm Homes' petition and a poster for national FoE climate action petition to the Earth Fayre at All Saints Church Wokingham and added a few more signatures.

**26<sup>th</sup> October:** - Stall at The Minster for presentation on 'Extreme Weather and Global Warming' by Dr Till Kuhlbrodt from UoR. Chris, Graham and John engaged with other attendees.

The Minster allowed us to display our climate action banner to people in St Mary's Butts.



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### November-December Activities with Reading FoE, FoE SE region, and national FoE:

**Monday 6<sup>th</sup> November** – 7 pm – 8:15pm. **FoE South East Online Meet up on Zoom.**

Guest speaker Abdi Suleiman, Political Affairs Manager at Friends of the Earth.

"Abdi has a wealth of experience and knowledge of navigating Westminster politics and will be joining us to share his thinking on the run to the next General Election - what we can expect from the Parties, what the key issues are likely to be, and how we can get our campaigns on the agenda." <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/south-east-meet-up-november-registration-741399173887>

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November** – **Climate Score Cards webinar.** FoE think the scorecards (see below) are an amazing resource for Local Action Groups to use in holding councils to account and campaigning to raise their game. They are hosting a webinar on 16 November from 6:30 until 8:00 pm with Climate Emergency UK.

Join the webinar to:

- Learn about the methodology behind the Scorecards
- Understand how you can use the Scorecards to delve into your own council's performance
- Share experiences and ideas for using the Scorecards to boost your council's actions on climate and ecological emergencies.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/council-climate-action-scorecards-registration-736459348737>

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November – United for Warm Homes Day of Action** [United for Warm Homes Day of Action](#)

We need to decide whether to present our petitions to local MPs or delay this for a while.

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December – “Global Day of Action on COP28”** – not sure if anything is planned locally. If you hear of anything let us know – and we'll publicise it via e-mail and Facebook.

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**“Reading for Warm Homes” - petition to Reading MPs – sign now!**

Including 'on-paper' signatures we now have about 140. National target date for presentation to MPs is 18<sup>th</sup> November so we need to decide whether to go with that date or delay and try to increase the numbers. Please help us publicise this initiative to other local people and concerned groups. We will be happy to supply leaflets, petition forms, draft articles for newsletters ...

*Sign petition here:* <https://tinyurl.com/5n7tu5tt> Please sign if you are in either Reading constituency (Alok Sharma in Reading West or Matt Rodda in Reading East) or in the new 'Earley and Woodley' constituency – we can sort by postcode later.

Petition calls for:

Urgent support for people dealing with sky-high energy bills.

A new emergency programme to insulate our heat-leaking homes

An energy system powered by cheap, green renewables.

Please help us publicise this initiative to other local people and concerned groups. We will be happy to supply leaflets, petition forms, draft articles for newsletters, etc.

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**Council Pension Funds still invested in Fossil Fuels:**

Latest analysis suggests £5.3 million (0.3%) of Berkshire Councils' pension funds are still invested in fossil fuels – very little improvement in the last 6 years - but that seems to be based on analysis of only about 62% of the fund's investments so there could be much more. [Platform UK Divest \(platformlondon.org\)](http://Platform UK Divest (platformlondon.org))

Local Pensions Partnership Investments has committed to 'Net Zero' by 2050 – seen as 'a significant multi-decadal ambition' - <https://www.localpensionspartnership.org.uk/Investment-management/Our-net-zero-commitment> - with lots of beautiful 'green' outdoor pictures in their 25-page 'roadmap'.

**Reading Transport Strategy 2040**

Consultation closes on 11<sup>th</sup> December. We hope to generate a 'group response' but please respond as individuals as well. Reading Cycle campaign has already had a meeting with the Council about this, and Caversham District Residents Association have a meeting scheduled for 6<sup>th</sup> November (see below).

Consultation documents are at: <https://www.reading.gov.uk/vehicles-roads-and-transport/transport-strategy/reading-transport-strategy-2040/>

Councillor Ennis has written “This strategy provides high quality and realistic alternatives to the private car through new and upgraded railway stations, new park and rides and quick, reliable public and affordable transport routes. It includes major new schemes to promote and strengthen public transport links, including a fundamental review of options to improve sustainable travel over the River Thames to reduce congestion and improve air quality for residents.”

“It includes new pedestrian and cycle routes, and the infrastructure to support it. It includes demand management schemes, to remove the most polluting vehicles from our streets, particularly those with absolutely no business in Reading. This strategy also outlines how we will work with partners to fund and to help deliver the vision.”

Lots of useful information and idealistic 'visions' and policies – very little detail on improvements to expect in next few years. Presumably RBC would say 'it's a strategy' not a commitment. But road transport CO2 emissions target is only to drop from 100.4 kt in 2020 to 54 kt by 2040. Not clear how this fits with Council's stated “objective to create a net zero carbon Reading by 2030.”

Pages 101 and 102 address options for a new Thames Bridge to link from Caversham to the A3290.

- “The scheme will include enhancing existing public transport, walking and cycle routes across the river, alongside fundamentally reviewing new options **including the need for an additional river crossing and associated orbital route around the north of Caversham** to link a new crossing with the A4074. Due to the scale of the scheme, it is likely to be delivered in phases, reflective of funding and land availability.”
- “Whilst initially designed to carry, public transport, walking, cycling **and general traffic**, the bridge will be designed to be suitable in the future to carry other forms of public transport, such as micromobility vehicles, shared autonomous shuttles/ buses, guided buses, trams or light rail.”

This would tend to encourage continued use of motor vehicles for longer distance travel. Previous investigations over the years have suggested this scheme would be very expensive – so perhaps not a priority for funding?

‘Demand Management’ is discussed from page 104 with no commitment or timescale. “This scheme will investigate options to deliver demand management measures locally within Reading, whilst also acknowledging the potential for demand management to be delivered on a wider scale, such as a nationwide road user charging or mobility charging scheme.”

### **Air Quality**

Reading Council’s Clean Air and Safer Transport Forum on 4<sup>th</sup> July received an Air Quality update – reviewed in our September newsletter.

National FoE analysis was covered in Reading Chronicle in October finding 95 neighbourhoods in Reading (98%) were exposed to air pollution exceeding the World Health Organisation recommended safety limit. This meant approximately 157,000 people were breathing polluted air in the area in 2022.

<https://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/23849154.dangerously-high-air-pollution-nearly-reading-neighbourhoods/>

Reading Council will bring a revised Air Quality Management Action Plan to SEPT committee in November with focus on NO2 exceedances and new emphasis on PM2.5 reduction.

### **Climate Scorecards:**

Heads-up from national FoE: “In 2022 Climate Emergency UK assessed every published council Climate Action Plan and released the results as a set of Scorecards. Now they have completed the far more demanding task of awarding Scorecards for every council’s actual performance against the climate goals they have set.

<https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/> “

It is very hard to judge how seriously to take these scores without deep investigation into the assessment and scoring system. For example Reading was awarded no points for school streets when in fact it has some school streets. But note that Reading was awarded penalty points on transport – presumably because of poor local air quality.

Reading’s overall score was 47% compared with 40% (West Berkshire), 35% (Windsor and Maidenhead), 33% (Wokingham), 27% (Bracknell) and 19% (Slough). So Reading is Best of Berkshire – as a school report might say ‘good progress but needs improvement’.

### **Reading’s Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport committee – 15<sup>th</sup> November:**

The final meeting of this important Council Committee this year. An opportunity to read updated reports on environmental topics – including annual report on Climate Emergency Strategy - and to ask questions on relevant issues – perhaps:

- Good to see take-up of solar panels in Reading following recent initiative. Can the Council do more to provide sound guidance on retro-fitting homes to reduce carbon emissions?
- Can Local Plan review include measures to achieve implementation of district heating with ground-sourced or water-sourced heat pumps – as discussed in a RBC presentation to Reading Climate Festival?

Agenda and reports for SEPT usually go on-line a week before the meeting so just in time for our November meeting.

<https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx>

### **Global emissions data visualised:**

EDGAR - Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research - is a multipurpose, independent, global database of anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases and air pollution on Earth.

Perhaps most striking is a huge pie chart showing emissions estimates for all the counties of the world to scale.

“China, the United States, India, the EU27, Russia and Brazil were the six world largest GHG emitters in 2022. Together they account for 50.1% of global population, 61.2% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 63.4% of global fossil fuel consumption and 61.6% of global GHG emissions.

“Among these top emitters, in 2022 China, the United States and India increased their emissions compared to 2021, with India having the largest increase in relative terms (5%). On the contrary, the other three top emitters decreased their emissions in 2022, with Russia showing the largest decrease (-2.4%).”

## **XR Explanation:**

Click to explore concerns about climate emergency <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-truth/the-emergency/>

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

**Monday 6 November – Reading Transport Strategy 2040 – Issues for North Reading** CADRA open meeting on Transport Strategy at 7.30pm in the Caversham Baptist Church, Prospect Street. With Chris Maddocks, Strategic Transport Manager for Reading Borough Council and Robert Williams, CEO of Reading Buses.  
[https://www.cadra.org.uk/uploads/wysiwyg\\_editor/files/Newsletters/CADRA-News-Autumn-2023.pdf](https://www.cadra.org.uk/uploads/wysiwyg_editor/files/Newsletters/CADRA-News-Autumn-2023.pdf)

**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November** – 19:30 at RISC - Nick Dearden talking about his new book - '*Pharmanomics: How Big Pharma Destroys Global Health*' – a meeting for Reading Global Justice. <https://www.versobooks.com/en-gb/products/3036-pharmanomics>

**Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November** – 6 pm at LIDO - **Light Up The Night Bike Ride** <https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/light-up-the-night-bike-ride/>

**Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November** – 19:15 Maiden Place Community Centre - **Losing Eden ... why our minds need the wild** – talk by Lucy Jones – author of <https://www.waterstones.com/book/losing-eden/lucy-jones/9780141992617> - for Earley Environmental Group. (1) [Earley Environmental Group | PLEASE NOTE THE NEW DATE FOR THIS TALK... | Facebook](#)

**Reading and District Natural History Society** – programme of events – see <https://rdnhs.org.uk/blog/>

**Kidical Mass Reading** - "Making space for the next generation, one bike ride at a time!" - are holding a number of rides for children in the coming months - see [www.kidicalmassreading.co.uk](http://www.kidicalmassreading.co.uk) or on Twitter @KidicalMassRead

**Reading Critical Mass** cycle ride ... Rides on the last Friday of month. Leaving at 19:30 from the Civic Offices in Bridge street. Leisurely ride for about an hour and a half finishing at pub.

**XR Reading** hold meetings and events – see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/XRRdg/>

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

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

**Reading Bicycle Kitchen** – regular sessions – see <https://www.readingbicyclekitchen.org/>

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

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## **Useful Links and General Information:**

Recent links for Reading FoE stalls and campaigns: [www.readingfoe.org.uk/links](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/links)

Friends of the Earth 'England, Wales and Northern Ireland' <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/>  
– Policy and Insight <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/>

GREN - Greater Reading Environmental Network <http://www.gren.org.uk/>. Also [Greater Reading Environment Network | Facebook](#)

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 FoE Officers etc.**

Our 2023 AGM on April 13<sup>th</sup> elected Enrico Petrucco to continue in the post of Co-ordinator and Paolo Turati to take over from John Booth as Treasurer.

## **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](mailto: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:**

A subscription/donation would be welcome from supporters but is not required. We're much happier to have an extra pair of hands doing the important stuff. 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 address newsletter costs, meeting room hire and campaign expenses. Further contributions would be greatly appreciated. To contribute please pay cash at a meeting or event or request our bank account details.