

Reading Friends of the Earth



**Friends of
the Earth**

Newsletter Sep/Oct 2010

For more information see <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading>
email info@readingfoe.org.uk or 'phone 0118 9868260.

Diary:

General Meetings: Reading FoE usually meets on the second Wednesday of each month upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 8:00 p.m.

September 8th: – 8:00 p.m. at RISC – General Meeting – topics to include Rushy Mead and Carbon Budgets.

October 13th: - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – General Meeting - topics by e-mail later – possibly a speaker on water.

Other FoE Activities:

Friday September 10th – FoE Local Groups Conference at Reading University – **Power and Politics: can we create a different environment?** Ken Livingstone and Phillip Blond (Director of Res Publica) 7:30 for 8:00 p.m. Palmer Building – free but booking essential – see http://www.foe.co.uk/events/power_politics_24839.html

Wednesday October 20th – Heathrow – defeat of the third runway – John Stewart, Chairman of HACAN (Heathrow Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise). The Independent on Sunday voted him 'Britain's most effective environmentalist'. Reading FoE-sponsored meeting as part of Reading International Festival.

Other Activities and Meetings:

Tuesday 28th September – **Transport Users' Forum** – Reading Borough Council, Civic Offices, 6:30 p.m

Thursday 7th October – Greenpeace meeting on **Rushy Mead** with speaker from Partnership for Renewables

25th – 31st October – **Energy Saving Week** – expect the Borough Council to run activities – also Reading FoE and GREN are planning a public event to encourage take-up of Feed In Tariffs (or Clean Energy Cashback).

Earley Green Fair:

We had a successful stall at Earley Green Fair – despite some showers. As well as our 'Knock Down Recycling' skittles game for children we supported the proposals for wind turbines at Rushy Mead just south of Earley.

Householders Against Rushy Mead (HARM - <http://www.rushymeadharm.org/>) had a stall at the event so we were able to provide some balance to their opinions.

Helped by some members of Greenpeace and the Green Party we gave out briefing documents and showed photo-montages from 'Partnerships for Renewables' who are developing the proposals. We spoke to at least two Councillors.



Earley Green Fair

Green Development in South Reading:

We had sponsored two separate teams of students to look at options for the "Courage Brewery" site and the old "Digital Pyramids" site between the old A33 and the A33 Relief Road. Both are interesting because of proximity to the M4 – what 'green' options are there for a site with excellent motorway access?

The reports on the two sites are complete, see <http://www.anjoro.plus.com/downloads/southreading.doc>. In July we had a positive meeting with two of the Councillors for Whitley and briefed Green Councillor Rob White. Next stages should be to see more Councillors and try to get coverage in the Press.

Heathrow Expansion:

Reading FoE has arranged a meeting on this with John Stewart of HACAN (Heathrow Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise) on October 20th, as part of the International Festival.

According to HACAN: "The dropping of the third runway by the new Government was a momentous decision. It was what the aviation industry wanted above all. The decision came as a result of an iconic campaign spanning nearly a decade. The triumph was no fluke. It wasn't a question of luck. It was the result of a clear strategy, a radical approach, daring tactics and an utter refusal to believe that we wouldn't win."

"Expansion would have meant:

- A big increase of planes on the existing runways
- A third runway and 6th terminal
- Total flight numbers to rise to over 700,000 a year
- At least 150,000 people under the new flight path
- Over 1 million people disturbed by noise from Heathrow
- At least 700 homes destroyed
- Air Pollution set to exceed the EU legal limits
- Heathrow set to become the single biggest source of CO2 in the UK"

For details of the recent High Court Ruling against it see

<http://www.hacan.org.uk/resources/briefings/high.court.ruling.pdf>

Get Serious Campaign

At the full Council meeting on 29th June Councillor Hartley moved a motion noting that climate change is a reality, and global action is essential to cut greenhouse gas emissions in order to avoid a catastrophic temperature rise of more than 2 degrees. This was as a result of our 'Get Serious' postcard campaign over the previous year.

Council resolved to:

1. Support the aims of the Friends of the Earth Get Serious About CO2 campaign, which calls for more money and support for local authorities with the introduction of local carbon budgets for every council.
2. Integrate carbon reduction plans into ALL relevant future council plans and strategies.
3. Work with the local community through the Reading Climate Change Partnership and Local Strategic Partnership to meet our vision of a low carbon city of the future.

This is a useful re-affirmation of the Council's position - Reading Borough Council has already taken positive steps including signing up to the Nottingham Declaration, passing the Reading Climate Change Strategy, signing up to the 10:10 campaign, and setting up the Reading Climate Change Partnership. Unfortunately the motion was amended to merely 'support the aims' of Get Serious rather than to 'sign up to' the campaign (as originally proposed), and it did not commit the Council to a stronger local target for emissions.

The next phase of Get Serious is to promote FoE's call for local carbon budgets - see

http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/local_carbon_budgets.pdf

Rushy Mead Turbines:

The University of Reading owns land south of the M4 between junctions 10 and 11 and is working with Partnerships for Renewables (PfR) to explore the feasibility of siting four wind turbines on the land around Rushy Mead – for which it would receive a share of the revenues. PfR is a Carbon Trust enterprise, part-funded by HSBC. A planning application is expected in the next few months. <http://www.pfr.co.uk/rushymead/>

Local residents "Householders Against Rushy Mead" (HARM - <http://www.rushymeadharm.org/>) are mounting an energetic campaign against the development with particular concerns about noise, flood risk, and visual amenity.

Climate change threatens millions both here and abroad with death or disruption and higher costs. If we don't act urgently many of the world's poorest will be left hungry and homeless and people in the UK will be affected by rising food prices and more floods and droughts. We must reduce our use of fossil fuels to cut carbon emissions and our dependence on energy from abroad. On-shore wind-farms are proven technology, can quickly start to generate clean electricity, and require less subsidy than other renewable sources of energy.

However it's important that local concerns are properly answered and that Wokingham's planners make a professional judgement on the issues raised by HARM.

- Noise requires professional technical assessment, amateur opinions are of little value although the Green Park turbine does seem very quiet! See Reading FoE March newsletter for previous discussion of noise aspects: http://www.anjoro.plus.com/RFOE/Documents/Newsletter/readingfoe_news_mar_10.pdf

- Flood risk due to the access roads used for construction and servicing can surely be reduced to an acceptable level by civil engineering measures – but the need for them must be identified
- Visual impact is bound to be subjective – to some of us wind turbines have very positive connotations. The Rushy Mead site is affected by two rows of electricity pylons and the M4 is close by to the north, and in the photo-montages the turbines usually appear small compared to trees and lamp-posts.

Planning and Development South of M4 – and North of the M4

Wokingham Council is to discuss its way forward on housing numbers – now the Government has said that targets in the South East Plan need not apply - at a Cabinet meeting in late September.

Eager to proceed without waiting for a Council Masterplan the University has applied for full planning permission for an Eastern Relief Road to bypass Shinfield Village and for outline planning permission for 1,350 dwellings to the south-west of the village. This would be largely on greenfield land and would add to commuting both to Reading and along the M4.

The Prudential have re-applied for a 737-home 'Green Park Village' adjacent to Green Park but to the east of the Basingstoke line (unlike Kennet Valley Park which would have been to the west of the line). Whilst adding to the population of central Berkshire and pressure on local services – and being quite handy for the M4 J11 – at least this is north of the motorway and close to the proposed Green Park station (promised 2011).

Blue Living have appealed against West Berkshire's refusal of planning permission for 750 homes at Pincents Hill – see <http://savepincentshill.co.uk/>

Coalition Agreement and Government Cuts

The coalition agreement is at http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg_coalition.pdf. It appears to promise to continue some good environmental policies, and to introduce some useful changes. It says they will:

- reinstate an Operating and Financial Review to ensure that directors' social and environmental duties have to be covered in company reporting, and investigate further ways of improving corporate accountability and transparency.
- maintain the Green Belt, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and other environmental protections.
- introduce honesty in food labelling so that consumers can be confident about where their food comes from and its environmental impact.
- work towards a 'zero waste' economy, encourage councils to pay people to recycle.
- create a presumption in favour of sustainable development in the planning system.
- oppose the resumption of commercial whaling, press for a ban on ivory sales, and tackle the smuggling and illegal trade on wildlife through our new Border Police Force.
- honour the commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on overseas aid from 2013, and enshrine this in law.
- establish a high speed rail network and support Crossrail and further electrification of the rail network.
- use a wide range of levers to cut carbon emissions, decarbonise the economy and support the creation of new green jobs and technologies, and create a green investment bank.
- establish a full system of feed-in tariffs in electricity
- introduce measures to promote a huge increase in energy from waste through anaerobic digestion.

However among the list of 'cuts' promised in recent weeks both the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/> and the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP) <http://www.rcep.org.uk/> are to go – see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-10725394>.

The SDC has been providing advice on environmental improvement leading to cost savings worth far more than its budget. The RCEP has produced reports on transport, nuclear power, biofuels, nanotechnology and other topics over many years - the 1976 'Flowers Report' on nuclear power was a valuable introduction to the topic and 'Energy - the Changing Climate' in 2000 has been equally useful. They will be sadly missed.

Transition Reading

Reading's Transition Town movement <http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/> held a showing of the film 'In Transition' in August and is following this up with meetings in September and October.

Join GREN and keep in touch:

Get automatic updates on news and events by signing up to the Greater Reading Environmental Network (GREN). The GREN website is intended to be a comprehensive portal to all environmental groups in the area – allowing us to list activities and add news items. Reading FoE is now listed there and many groups post details of meetings. Everyone is encouraged to register and to use the site to post news, events, references etc. www.gren.org.uk

Useful Websites etc.:

www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk
www.foe.co.uk

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

Transition Reading - Reading's Transition Town movement
<http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/>

Doorstep collection of WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) service in Reading being offered by Midex Reverse Technologies <http://www.midex-rt.com/>

True Food Co-op: www.truefood.coop now with new shop in Emmer Green!

Reading Borough Council Waste and Recycling:
<http://www.reading.gov.uk/environmentandplanning/wasteandrecycling/>

South East Forum for Sustainability: <http://www.sefs.org.uk>

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)

Local Food Directory, with links: http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk/Local_Economy.htm

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

Reading FoE Officers

At our 2010 AGM on April 14th 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 join in our day-to-day communications please email 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 2010/11

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 £7.00 / £4.00 (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.