

Reading Friends of the Earth



**Friends of
the Earth**

Newsletter Sept/Oct 2012

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

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.

September 12th: – 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – including discussion of Bee Cause activities and planning for Clean British Energy day in October - and other topics later by e-mail to the list.

October 10th: - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General Meeting** – topics later by e-mail to the list.

Other Reading FoE Activities and Meetings:

Saturday September 8th – BeeCause Stall by kind permission of RISC at their Roof Garden Heritage Open Day – 12:00 to 16:00 at RISC (entry at back of building) – please visit us and the Roof Garden.

Saturday September 29th – ‘Sudden Colony Collapse’ – evening to very late in Global Cafe at RISC. An evening of music, poetry and entertainment – with a Reading FoE stall and some Bee-related food, drink and competitions. Small charge on door. Final details in progress – will be posted on www.readingfoe.org.uk when available.

Saturday October 13th – Clean British Energy – national FoE ‘Day of Action’ – hope to arrange something in Reading.

Other Activities and Meetings (not run by Reading FoE):

Saturday September 8th – Green Park Turbine Tour at 11:00 under Heritage Open Day scheme – **booking essential** – see <http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/directory/hod011978e>

Sunday September 9th – Reading’s First Superhome – a vastly-improved Victorian semi-detached - open to (**pre-booked**) visitors from 11:00 to 15:45 <http://www.superhomes.org.uk/superhomes/reading-eastern-avenue/>

Thursday 13th September – RBC Traffic Management Panel – Civic Offices – from 18:30

Weekend 14th to 16th September – FoE Conference at Imperial College, London – £5 tickets available for Saturday night rally with Caroline Lucas and Vivienne Westwood <http://friendsoftheearthconference.eventbrite.com/>

Tuesday October 2nd – Green Drinks at RISC - Come along to the Global Café from 6.30 to 8.30pm to meet like-minded people for a chat over a drink or two. <http://www.greendrinks.org/berkshire/reading>



Photos: Anne Booth
and Veronica Leeke



Bees are in trouble and action is needed to help them. This national campaign started with distribution of packets of flower seeds and has now moved on to a petition calling on David Cameron to implement a National Bee Action Plan.

Reading FoE are holding two events in September – details above -

- a stall at RISC Roof Garden Open Day on Saturday 8th to distribute seeds, information, and petition cards *and*
- an evening of entertainment at RISC on Saturday 29th with a Reading FoE stall.

Bees in the UK are declining at a worrying rate and as well as the implications for biodiversity (two of the 250 species have become extinct and some others are in severe decline) there could be a high economic price to pay. According to a report from Reading University £510 million of annual crop sales in the UK are pollinated by insects of which £137.4 million is in the South East – crops like apples, strawberries and oilseed rape. In the absence of Bees the farm gate price of apples would double.

A National Bee Action Plan would:

- help farmers to provide the food and habitats that bees need
- reduce use of pesticides and suspend the use of pesticides thought to be killing bees until exonerated
- designate more habitat sites for Bees and include them as a priority group in the Biodiversity 2020 Strategy
- provide guidance and expertise so that local authorities can improve Local Plan policies to favour bees
- commit to more research on bee health

Transition Town Reading members are working to arrange Bee Walks to identify suitable habitat. Reading FoE members are preparing to respond to a request from the local Labour Party for guidance on local actions such as planting schemes.

Information about the Bee Cause has already been published in a local paper, accompanied by a photograph of 'Fuzzy Bee' – someone wearing the Bee costume we borrowed from FoE in London. 'Fuzzy' has already toured the town and been photographed in many locations – watch out for more press coverage!

Friends of the Earth website and on-line petition

http://www.foe.co.uk/what_we_do/bee_cause_petition_35038.html

University of Reading report for Friends of the Earth 'The Decline of England's Bees'

<http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/beesreport.pdf>

Reading FoE visits Renewable Energy Co-operatives

Reading Friends of the Earth visited the Westmill Windfarm in Oxfordshire at the beginning of August to learn more about this form of alternative and clean energy.

The five wind turbines are situated on an old airfield right in the middle of the countryside with working fields running right up to them.

We had a fascinating morning learning about this 100% community investment which was sponsored by the coop but was the idea of a local farmer - how it was initiated, works, feeds into the national grid and has overwhelming local support.

We were particularly impressed by how quiet these machines were despite the fact that they were spinning the whole time we were there and we stood right under them.

Recently a large solar park has also been developed within the vicinity of these windmills adding further low-carbon energy to the national mix.

It was an educative and inspiring visit. To read more about this clean energy development see: http://www.westmill.coop/westmill_windfarm.asp

'Beyond the Bluster' - Think Tank Supports Wind-power

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has published a (short, readable) new report by a Renewable Energy Consultancy that supports claims that wind power can significantly reduce carbon emissions, is reliable, poses no threat to energy security, and is technically capable of providing a significant proportion of the UK's electricity supply with minimal impact on the existing operation of the grid.

It says that "onshore wind is one of the most cost-effective of the low-carbon technologies and, with continuing government support, the average wind farm globally may produce power at costs that compete with fossil fuels as soon as 2016. This means that it is an important technology for keeping down the costs of reducing emissions and meeting the 2020 renewable target. A low ambition for onshore wind would mean a greater amount of generation from other, more expensive, technologies and, therefore, higher electricity bills."

http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2012/08/beyond-the-bluster_Aug2012_9564.pdf



Looking up at the fifth turbine in the row.

Domestic Appliances – Using Energy In Our Homes.

At our August meeting David Lim, a research student at Reading University, told us that the electricity used by appliances has doubled since 1970 and is predicted to reach 45% of domestic consumption by 2020. Some homes have over 80 appliances – from freezers to computers and mobile phone chargers - the average number has increased from around 20 in 1970 to 40 today.

People often don't understand how much electricity costs or how much different appliances use - fridges, freezers, washing machines and tumble dryers all use significant amounts of energy.

Saving energy starts with buying efficient equipment – checking the energy label and working out annual cost - and then using it carefully. Where possible equipment should be switched off at the mains rather than left on 'standby' – even if the manufacturer has reduced standby power to only one Watt it will still cost well over a pound per year.

In the future it will be possible to control some equipment so that it takes less power temporarily at times of peak electricity demand – not just 'smart meters' but 'smart grids' - this will reduce energy consumption and cost.

Mr Lim needs more volunteers to get involved in a survey of appliance use – details are on the website www.appliancesurvey.org.

Climate Change Strategy Revision.

The revision of the Reading Climate Change Strategy to run from 2013 to 2020 is progressing – drafts are being edited and combined with a view to returning to public consultation at the beginning of November.

Current drafts are on <http://www.rgbn.org.uk/>.

Earley Green Fair – and Clean British Energy.

We enjoyed the usual busy day at this annual event in early August. Our 'Brighton Board' cut-out for Clean British Energy got our photograph and a mention into one of the local papers. About 30 people signed the postcards to various MPs supporting a cut in energy waste and switching to Clean British Energy as our best hope for affordable fuel bills in future.

Our haul of postcards so far from this event and the Waterfest is:

- Rob Wilson MP – Reading East - 34 cards
- John Redwood MP – Wokingham - 29 cards
- Alok Sharma MP – Reading West - 18 cards

http://www.foe.co.uk/what_we_do/clean_british_energy_35564.html

International Energy Agency - Energy Technology Perspectives Report 2012

Sub-titled 'Pathways to a Clean Energy System' the Executive Summary says that progress in clean energy is too slow. "A technological transformation of the energy system is still possible, despite current trends. The integrated use of key existing technologies would make it possible to reduce dependency on imported fossil fuels or on limited domestic resources, decarbonise electricity, enhance energy efficiency and reduce emissions in the industry, transport and buildings sectors. This would dampen surging energy demand, reduce imports, strengthen domestic economies, and over time dramatically reduce greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions." "Investing in clean energy makes economic sense – every additional dollar invested can generate three dollars in future fuel savings by 2050."

The report explores three scenarios – '2DS', '4DS', and '6DS' - resulting in 2°C, 4°C and 6°C temperature rises in the long term respectively. 6DS is largely a continuation of current trends, 4DS takes account of recent pledges, and 2DS requires cutting energy-related CO₂ emissions by more than half in 2050 (compared with 2009) and ensuring that they continue to fall thereafter. Importantly, the 2DS scenario acknowledges that transforming the energy sector is vital, but not the sole solution: the goal can only be achieved provided that CO₂ and greenhouse gas emissions in non-energy sectors are also reduced.

The 2DS scenario demonstrates how energy efficiency and accelerated deployment of low-carbon technologies can help cut government expenditure, reduce energy import dependency and lower emissions.

"Putting a meaningful price on carbon would send a vital price signal to consumers and technology developers. Phasing out fossil fuel subsidies – which in 2011 were almost seven times higher than the support for renewable energy – is critical to level the playing field across all fuels and technologies."

<http://www.iea.org/etp/>

Useful Websites etc.:

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

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

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

Pangbourne and Whitchurch Sustainability Group (PAWS) <http://www.pawsg.com/>

True Food Co-op: www.truefood.coop - Winner Best Retail Initiative BBC Food & Farming Awards 2011 - shop in Emmer Green and local markets!

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

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 AGM on April 11th 2012 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 2012/13

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.