

Reading Friends of the Earth Newsletter Sept/Oct 2015



friends of
the earth
Reading

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

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.

September 9th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – discussion of current campaign areas – particularly Run on Sun (Solar Schools), opposition to loss of hard shoulder to M4 'Smart Motorway', government threats to renewable energy support, and keeping the ban on pesticides that harm bees.

October 14th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – discussion of current campaign areas – details later.

Other Activities with Reading FoE:

Saturday 3rd October – Reading Town Meal <http://www.readingtowntmeal.org.uk/> – help needed for FoE stall in Forbury Gardens from about 11:00 to 16:00 - campaigning on energy/climate policies and bees. Please volunteer.

Saturday 10th October – 'Day of Action' on **Barclays and Fracking** - <https://www.foe.co.uk/page/join-day-climate-action-10-october> - details of local action to be agreed.

Monday 26th October – “**Global Climate Change**” – talk by Prof. Richard P. Allan of University of Reading – see below - RISC Conference Hall (entry from back of building) 7:45 pm.. Part of Reading International Festival.

Other Activities (not run by Reading FoE):

Wednesday 16th September – Mapledurham Community Energy – 6:00 at UoR Students' Union – share offer for community energy from anaerobic digestion – see <http://mapledurham-energy.org/>

Wednesday 16th September – Berkshire Energy Pioneers –7:30 at RISC – planning for community energy – see <http://berkshireenergypioneers.readinguk.org/>

Sunday 20th September – Repair Café - 12:00 pm - 4:30 pm @ rLab, Unit C1, Weldale Street, Reading, RG1 7BX

Wednesday 23rd September – Reading Sustainability Centre – open meeting - Council Chamber 7:00 pm
<http://readingsustainabilitycentre.co.uk/category/events/>

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>

"Hiatus, Hockey Sticks and Global Climate Change"

This is the full title of the talk that Professor Richard P. Allan of the University on Reading has agreed to give for us on 26th October in the Reading International Festival series (see above).

Climate change should be high on the agenda as we approach the 'Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change' in Paris in December – COP21. This is a chance to review the evidence and the science behind the Hockey Stick controversy https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hockey_stick_controversy and recent claims by 'climate deniers' that warming has stopped.

Professor Allan is a Professor of Climate Science at the Department of Meteorology and says: "My research is driven by the fundamental question: How much will the Earth warm in the current century and what are the implications for the global water cycle, upon which societies and ecosystems depend? In this talk I will review how climate has changed in the past and why this provides an essential context for current and future changes in climate driven primarily by emissions of greenhouse gases through human activity. Finally I will discuss the facts behind some of the issues surrounding Earth's climate, hotly debated in the public domain, including the apparent recent 'hiatus' in global warming."

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

The six-month 'Examination' into this proposal started on 3rd September. Tanja and John joined people from Earley and Maidenhead at a masked photo-call before the preliminary meeting in Maidenhead – others present included Sian Berry from CfBT, and Brenda Pollack (SE Campaigner) and Jenny Bates (London and Air Quality campaigner) from FoE.

At the preliminary meeting the Examining Authority was very keen to keep discussion to process, and to get everything in writing, and emphasised tight timescales for responses to her written questions to keep to her six-month deadline.

She said our document of proposed changes to Principal Issues would go on the website and invited people to make written comments. This meant we did not get to say a lot of what we had planned to say in support of our proposed changes.

We did speak up for Open Floor Hearings at convenient times – but the Examining Authority said that she didn't work on Saturdays but did propose some sessions on weekday evenings.



The official record of the meeting is accessible on the 'Project Page' under 'Overview' - entry for 7th September. <http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/south-east/m4-junctions-3-to-12-smart-motorway/>

Proposal is for a 'Smart Motorway' at a cost estimated to be close to a billion pounds:

- 'Managed Motorway' - gantries, signage, cameras, sensors, speed controls etc. – likely to improve safety, reduce congestion, and slightly increase peak hour traffic volume (more traffic can flow safely and smoothly at around 55 mph than if drivers are allowed to try to go at 70 mph) ... and ...
- 'all lane running' – requires demolition and reconstruction of 11 bridges - there is no hard shoulder, just an additional lane for traffic and 'refuges' every 2.5 km – leading to a significant increase in capacity – but breakdowns and accidents must be more likely to cause lane closures, and there is no spare capacity.

Our position (contrary to some Radio Berkshire headlines which said we thought it wouldn't reduce congestion) is to argue only against 'all lane running' (ALR) on a range of environmental and safety grounds –

- Without a hard shoulder it will be less safe, and more congested when lanes have to be closed.
- Planned traffic growth will have implications for air quality, climate change, noise, and congestion on non-motorway approach roads.

Radio Berkshire interviewed Brenda at the meeting and there was much more on the Andrew Peach Show on 4th September. See summary on website <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-34151430>

- **Alan Stevens** - Chief Scientist and Research Director TRL and chair of ITS United Kingdom – in favour of 'Smart Motorways' – did not address hard shoulder specifically – said they would be faster and less stressful. Modelling and monitoring had shown no problems – as safe as conventional Motorways ... did say that hard shoulder running did imply extra costs ... you couldn't just start doing it
- **Nicholas Greig** – Director of Research at Institute of Advanced Motorists – safer than existing motorways – a stop-gap – cheaper than true widening with new hard shoulder – always issues on motorways about lane discipline and speed limits which 'Smart' would help.
- Presenter **Andrew Peach** was good at emphasizing fear factor if you break down with no hard shoulder
- **Nicholas Lyes** – RAC Motoring Services – much more helpful to our cause – said they had concerns about all lane running and safety – said there was lack of data on safety.
- For **Reading FoE** John then had about a minute (!) in which he said he agreed with Nicholas Lyes, pointed out that ALR required new bridges and was very costly, and outlined our concerns on impact of traffic growth on air quality, carbon emissions, noise and traffic on feeder roads.

Next steps: John will meet with FoE and CfBT staff to discuss where to put effort into the Examination – and will report back to our meeting on Wednesday 9th September.

Now we need as many people as possible to **call for Open Floor Hearings** or there won't be many. Please e-mail M4Junction3to12@pins.gsi.gov.uk before noon on 2nd October giving your name and address, and ask for an Open Floor Hearing in your area. Updates on this campaign will be posted to <http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/m4>

Energy and Climate and Run on Sun

Since the election the government has taken several steps backwards:

- The Zero Carbon Homes standard – proposals to reduce energy use in new buildings - in preparation since 2006 – has been abandoned.
- Renewable sources will have to pay the 'Climate Change Levy' – even though they are low-carbon.
- New on-shore wind turbines won't receive subsidy from April 2016.
- Department of Energy and Climate Change budget cut by £70 million.
- Vehicle excise duty for new cars will not be on a sliding scale to favour low emissions vehicles.

We now have a batch of 'Run on Sun' postcards for each local MP, signed by their constituents. The cards call for government to make it easier for schools to install PV panels and were signed at our stalls over the summer.

But on 27th August the government opened a consultation on a massive cut to the Feed in Tariff

- 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

This is likely to cripple the industry and make solar schools and community energy projects much less viable. According to the Energy Saving Trust "the government's cuts to the Feed-in Tariff are too sharp and too sudden." <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/blog/2015/09/reaction-feed-tariff-consultation-launch>

We will be able to lobby MPs on this while using the 'Run on Sun' cards to demonstrate local support for solar.

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>

Bee Cause Update

FoE has declared a 'Bee Action Fortnight' from 12th to 27th September – see <https://www.foe.co.uk/page/bee-action-fortnight-12-27-september-2015>.

The aim is to influence MPs to support continuing the EU ban on neonicotinoid pesticide seed coatings about which FoE says "The scientific evidence that neonicotinoids are harmful to bees is overwhelming. We need our Government to stand up for bees, not for pesticide companies."

We have no activities planned for the 'fortnight' but will be using the new materials – including petition forms and information leaflets and lots of sachets of flower-seeds – at the Town Meal on 3rd October.

August meeting – Bikes, Beauty and Beer - and a Meteor - in the Chilterns

We met at Goring station and (most of us) cycled to Hartslock Nature Reserve where we climbed the hill to get a beautiful view of the Thames, Brunel's railway line, and the woods and fields stretching into the distance.

The reserve is run by BBOWT and is famous for Monkey Orchids and other chalk grassland plants. By this time in late summer the most obvious were Clustered Bellflower and Harebells.

Returning to Goring some of us looked at the potential site for a hydro scheme at the weir <http://www.gssg.org.uk/> before ending the evening at the Catherine Wheel where – after a few drinks – a few of us saw the trail of a Perseid meteor.



Craig Bennett – CEO came through Reading FoE!

New FoE Chief Executive Officer Craig Bennett tweeted us to say that as a young man in the 1990s he had been a Reading FoE member and remembered 'lots of meetings at RISC' ... no change there then!

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

True Food Co-op: www.truefood.coop - shop in Emmer Green.

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)

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

Reading FoE Officers

At our AGM on April 8th 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 .

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.