

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter Sep/Oct 2016

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** 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.

September 14th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – probably discussing decision on 'Smart M4', Air Quality, and proposals for Mass Rapid Transit, and deciding on activities at the Town Meal.

October 12th - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **General meeting** – topics and details by e-mail.

Other Activities with Reading FoE:

Saturday 1st October – 12 - 4pm – **Reading Town Meal** in Forbury Gardens. Once again Reading College will be preparing a huge meal to share with the people of Reading and show how delicious home-grown food is – help needed for FoE stall which will probably focus on sustainable food as well as bees. Please get in touch.

Other Activities (not run by Reading FoE):

Wednesday 7th September – Global Justice Now - Mark Dearn, War on Want's Trade campaigner, will talk about 'Brexit and UK trade – where next?'. RISC at 7.30pm.

GREN Members' Meeting – 15th September 7:00 pm at Reading Bike Kitchen – see main text below.

Reading Climate Forum – three meetings planned in next two months - see main text below.

Sunday 18th September 12:00 to 4:30 - **Repair Cafe** is at The Warehouse, Cumberland Road see website for details of future events www.readingrepaircafe.org.uk

Wednesday 26th October – Global Justice Now - **How Companies Sue States -- Why TTIP and CETA are the tip of the iceberg** Investigative journalist **Claire Provost** will explain the threat bilateral investment treaties pose to progressive politics -- and how social movements around the world are fighting back. RISC at 7.30pm.

Monday 31st October 7.30-8.30 pm - **Population Growth, Reproductive Rights and Survival** - an illustrated talk covering the international growth of human population and environmental problems, the conflict with reproductive rights, and the impact on our long term survival. Bill Dowling – Population Matters – Reading group.

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>

'Smart M4' and Bees at Earley Green Fair:

On 6th August we had our annual excursion to Earley Green Fair on a fine and sunny day.

Thanks to Tanja and Chris and Steve for help with the stall. We collected 42 signed Bee-card petitions – mostly to John Redwood MP - to keep the ban on neonicotinoid pesticides.

We also gave out almost 60 flyers about the 'Smart M4' urging people to ask the Secretary of State to drop 'All Lane Running' from the plans.



Bees and Brexit

FoE has a new member of staff on the Bees campaign – Rosie Cotgreave – replacing Tom Wright. She has e-mailed asking us to ask our MPs to sign up to the Environment Pledge for a more environmentally friendly post-Brexit world. This is an initiative of the Green Alliance <http://www.green-alliance.org.uk/> .

FoE says: “The ban on bee-harming neonicotinoid pesticides, which the Bee Cause campaign is focused on, is a perfect example of why MPs should sign the pledge. The current restrictions on neonics' use are based on EU rules, so they could change in the future. Whatever happens next, our bees need long term protections from toxic pesticides.”

The Environmental Pledge covers wildlife and habitat protections; low carbon investment; ratifying the Paris agreement on climate change this year; and supporting farmers and landowners to deliver environmental benefits alongside a thriving farming sector.

It is on this link http://www.green-alliance.org.uk/pledge_for_the_environment.php -

Some guidance documents from FoE are on the links:

<https://www.foe.co.uk/blog/brexit-what-next-bees-fight-against-neonicotinoid-pesticides>

and <https://www.foe.co.uk/.../brexit-what-next-bees-local-group-guidance-august-2016-101684.pdf>

'Smart M4':

Decision is due by 3rd of September so hoping that safety concerns and the high cost (perhaps £500 million) of demolishing and replacing 11 bridges will persuade the Minister to turn down proposals for 'All Lane Running' without a hard shoulder – at least for the time being.

Thanks to everyone who has helped us to publicise the issues and make the case – local campaigners at the Open Floor Hearing – Chris, Tanja and John Hoggett for flyerling – Brenda Pollack at FoE for continuing support - FoE and CfBT staff involved in the Examination – journalists who used our Press Releases – Clive Jones of the Lib Dems and Keith Taylor Green MEP for Press Releases. And doubtless many more.

For more details up to end August see <http://www.readingfoe.org.uk/m4/> . To see the announcement when it comes <https://www.gov.uk/government/announcements?departments%5B%5D=department-for-transport>

GREN Events:

Greater Reading Environmental Network (GREN) has a Members' Meeting on 15th September at 7:00 pm at Reading Bike Kitchen – among topics will be Air Quality and Local Plan revision and it's a good opportunity to meet some more of Reading's environmental activists and see the Bike Kitchen. Agenda is at http://www.gren.org.uk/resources/160915_MemberMeetingAgenda.pdf

GREN's **Reading Climate Forum** series plans three meetings in the next two months - one on responding to local plan revisions and two on the '**warmhomes – cool planet**' theme. These meetings are supported by a grant from Reading Climate Action Network <http://www.readingclimateaction.org.uk/>

Check on <http://www.gren.org.uk> for details as they are finalised. The first event will be at RISC on Monday September 26th at 7:45 when Tony Cowling and Ian Gough will be talking about steps we can take to save energy in our homes.

Air Quality:

A number of people and groups in GREN are interested in air quality in Reading and John Oversby has just produced a review of it for GREN http://www.gren.org.uk/resources/GREN_AQ_Briefing.pdf concluding that the main risk locally is from very small particles PM2.5.

Reading FoE has the opportunity of borrowing monitoring equipment to measure PM2.5, and perhaps NO2, from FoE for a fortnight in September/October. This would be a <http://www.tsi.com/sidepak-personal-aerosol-monitor-am510/> for the PM2.5 and Diffusion Tubes for NO2. We would have to work out how best to deploy them to get useful and meaningful results. Help and ideas please!

A recent 2016 review of Air Quality by RBC is at http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/5653/Item08-NAQP-report-2016/pdf/Item08_NAQP_report_2016.pdf . This mentions 'clean air zones' as a possibility to reduce use of old diesels in urban areas - but this would not be not mandatory for Reading because NO2 (which UK is failing to control to EU limits) is expected to be OK by 2020.

Park and Ride for Broken Brow?

Long-standing ideas – opposed by many environmental campaigners over the last 20 years - for a park-and-ride site at Broken Brow and a bus-way across the Kennet to provide an easy public transport route to central Reading - are in the news again.

Park-and-Ride: Wokingham has put in a formal planning application for a 277-space park and ride site at Broken Brow – just to the East of Kennet Mouth. This will be discussed by Reading's Planning Committee (to agree a response to Wokingham) on 7th September – recommended approval despite documented local opposition <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/5856/Item15/pdf/Item15.pdf> .

It will probably go to Wokingham's Planning Committee for decision on 14th September.

It is unlikely to have a lasting beneficial effect on peak hour traffic from Suttons Seeds to Reading. Greater benefit – reducing both congestion and pollution from road traffic - could be achieved by encouraging/persuading more people to use public transport for all or most of the distance of their journeys to and from Reading.

The £3.6 million to be spent on this scheme could be used to improve public transport links with existing and new settlements in Wokingham. Further funding could be raised from road pricing, bridge tolling, or (following Nottingham's example) car park levies in Reading.

The proposed scheme is said to have a benefit-to-cost ratio of 2.6 to 1 when Residential Personal Transport Planning is supposed to have a 10:1 return, according to the Application for the Local Sustainable Transport Fund.

Mass Rapid Transit: A consultation on the East Reading MRT scheme proposals is now closed. Documents are at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/east-reading-mrt> . No planning application has yet been submitted.

Reading FoE response to the consultation said:

There would be very great loss of amenity, plus some effect on wildlife, along Thames-side.

The M4 modelling shows that existing wider road system cannot cope with the expected increase in traffic so best to spend money on measures to reduce traffic to address both congestion and environmental issues, rather than on vain attempts to add capacity.

Better bus priority is needed in East Reading. The 'missing link' in bus priority is from Cemetery Junction to the Suttons Seeds roundabout – approximately 700 metres taking perhaps a minute to cover at 30 mph or 2 minutes at 15 mph. Measures to introduce a tidal (or indeed signal-controlled alternate direction) bus-lane on this section of the A4 (the 'London Road option' dismissed by would presumably be far cheaper than the Mass Rapid Transit and could be implemented much more quickly.

Local authorities are allowed to introduce road pricing or parking levies which can reduce traffic and provide revenue for public transport support:

- Nottingham has raised its Workplace Parking Levy charge to £379 for employers who provide 11 or more liable places. The revenue, about £9 million last year, is invested in new tram lines and bus routes.
- under the Transport Act 2000, amended by the 2008 Local Transport Act, which governs various sorts of charging, councils can develop a scheme and apply to DfT for an order to implement it.
- charging for use of the two Reading bridges has been discussed in context of charging for use of the proposed Third Thames Bridge.

Readybikes And Bus Subsidies under threat:

Consultations open to 30th September:

Reading consultation on bus subsidy - https://consult.reading.gov.uk/css/proposed-changes-to-concessionary-fares/consult_view Concessionary passes issued to elderly residents will only be valid from 09.30 to 23.00 Mon-Fri rather than from 09.00 to 23.00 currently.

Reading consultation on Readybikes scheme – proposal to stop subsidy and close the scheme from 14th June 2017. https://consult.reading.gov.uk/css/readybike/consult_view

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 13th 2016 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 .

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 2016/17

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.