

Reading Friends of the Earth



Newsletter September – October 2023

For more info: 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 ... or 'phone 07503626167.

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 on the day or phone or e-mail for confirmation (contacts above). **BUT** see below for our October meeting – we are trying something new!

Wednesday September 13th: 7:30 pm. General meeting at RISC. Topics likely to include Reading's draft Transport Strategy – see below.

Wednesday October 11th: 7:30 pm. **Not at RISC** – location to be decided in September so check e-mails or website. Expect to be more of a social plus informal discussion of a range of environmental issues rather than a 'business' meeting with an agenda - but will discuss our future events and plans.

Recent Activities:

Excursion to Reading Hydro – 23rd August

Seven of us enjoyed an evening visit to Reading Hydro and drinks at the Lido (which uses much of the electricity generated by the Hydro) with Steve Goodman who guided us around the site and fish-pass.

Reading Hydro is a Community Benefit Society, a not-for-profit business. It was set up to design, finance, build and operate a hydropower scheme that generates renewable, low-carbon electricity from the power of the River Thames. Income from the renewable electricity is used to run the plant and repay investment. Any surplus will fund sustainability projects that benefit the local community. <https://readinghydro.org/>

Many volunteers have worked so hard and so long to create Reading Hydro - and continue to support it. Latest news is that cumulative generation has just passed 500 megawatt-hours of hydro electricity preventing about 200 tonnes of CO2 from going into the atmosphere <https://readinghydro.org/2023/07/information-boards/>

The Archimedes Screws were turning and water was flowing down the fish-pass. Many thanks to Steve for a very informative evening!

Earley Green Fair – 5th August



Rather a damp day – rain stopped play at 2 pm - but still quite a number of people came by and we had some more signatures on the 'Reading for Warm Homes' petition. We explained that at the next election Earley will be in the new 'Earley and Woodley' constituency formed from parts of Reading East, Reading West, Wokingham and West Berkshire.

Chris said he had spoken with several people including the Mayor of Earley and one of the prospective Labour Party candidates for new 'Earley and Woodley' parliamentary constituency.

Thanks to John, Anne, Chris and Tony.

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

Including ‘on-paper’ signatures we now have 90 so we need many more signatures to present to the MPs (with wider publicity!) in the autumn – national target date is 18th November. 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.

September-October Activities with Reading FoE, FoE SE region, and national FoE:

Thursday September 7th – 18:00 on-line – **United for Warm Homes Monthly Campaign Meeting** - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/everything-you-need-to-get-involved-in-the-warm-homes-day-of-action-registration-693986080047>

Sunday 10th September – 11:00 to 16:00 – Stall at **Reading Cycle Festival**, Christchurch Meadows. Hoping to talk about transport in Reading and get some signatures on ‘Reading for Warm Homes’ petition. Please let us know if you can help on our stall – we are rather short-staffed. <https://readingcyclefestival.co.uk/>

Tuesday 19th September – 11:00 to 16:00 indoor stall at a **Reading University Community and Sustainability Fair** near the Students’ Union. We could use one or two more helpers on the day.

Reading Transport Strategy 2040

This should go to consultation this September. Draft document presented at July SEPT is at <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s27712/Appendix%20A%20-%20Reading%20Transport%20Strategy%202040%20-%20Draft%20for%20Consultation.pdf>

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.

The strategy looks forward to “Accommodating Development” instead of managing it - saying:

“Economic success and growth in Reading is forecast to continue and substantial house building is planned in both Reading and neighbouring authority areas. Between 2013 and 2036 an additional 2,600 homes are planned to be built each year in the local area and population growth will mean more trips on our network each day.”

“Our vision for Reading 2050 is “an internationally recognised and economically successful city region, where low carbon living is the norm and the built environment, technology and innovation have combined to create a dynamic, smart and sustainable city with a high quality of life and equal opportunities for all”

Policy RTS17.2 says: “We will report on the current and forecast levels of traffic in Reading, and publish targets to reduce traffic growth.” But doesn’t propose policies for an absolute reduction in traffic.

Policy RTS22 | Demand Management 22.1: We will develop demand management measures to reduce congestion and improve the quality of life of our residents and prepare a supporting business.

‘Demand Management’ is discussed on 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 4th July received an Air Quality update – and we have now received a copy of the slides which show monitoring results up to 2022.

Nitrogen dioxide (NO2) levels showed a clear drop in 2020 but have risen. The automated measurements at four sites are well below the legal requirement of 40 ug/m³ annual average but the diffusion tubes in Friar Street are close to it and in Malcom Place (to the West of Caversham Road just before it goes under the railway) are still just above the limit. This is in context of revised WHO guidelines which say it should be under 10 ug/m³. Vehicle emissions are responsible for a lot of urban NO2

For micro-particles PM10 – currently monitored at four continuous monitoring stations – concentrations had been rising until 2019, then fell for two years, but are now back with Caversham Road higher than it has been since 2015

and the 'urban background; AURN site in the east Reading Cemetery higher than it has been since 2012. Caversham Road was at 25 ug/m³. UK regulations have a limit of 40 ug/m³ but WHO limit is 15 ug/m³.

For the most dangerous micro-particles - PM2.5 - the current UK target is 20 micrograms per cubic metre - four times higher than the new WHO recommendation of 5 ug/m³. The only place in Reading it is monitored is an 'urban background' site in the cemetery in East Reading https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/networks/site-info?site_id=REA1. The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 for England set interim targets that by January 2028 an annual average of 12 µg/m³ for PM2.5 is not exceeded at any monitoring station. Micro-particle emissions are from a variety of sources including industry, domestic combustion, and road vehicles.

Reading Council will bring a revised Air Quality Management Action Plan to committee in November with focus on NO₂ exceedances and new emphasis on PM2.5 reduction. Community groups in London have received meters to monitor PM2.5 – can something similar be done in Reading? <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/246935/breathe-london-final-round-community-groups/>

Berkshire Nature Recovery Strategy

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are being introduced to help local planning authorities identify opportunities to achieve 'net gain' – compensatory measures when nature is destroyed by development - and to assist them to promote environmental recovery and sustainability in their local plans. <https://bit.ly/3q0ynNz>

BBOWT is already active and has a Nature Recovery Map <https://www.bbowt.org.uk/nature-recovery-map>

Reading FoE were contacted by Rosie Street who is managing the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for RBWM who are the 'Responsible Authority' for the county. Over the next 11-17 months wide ranging consultations with stakeholders across the county will be conducted and used to create a Priority Map and list of priorities of Berkshire, signifying where nature restoration should take place. See [explanatory video](#) and the [latest information](#) on the strategies.

Please let us know if you would like to be involved in this. There are introductory webinars for individuals and NGOs in September and October <https://rbwmtogether.rbwm.gov.uk/berkshire-local-nature-recovery-strategy> .

Park and Ride at Kennetmouth

Some years ago we opposed proposals for a Park and Ride site and East Reading Mass Rapid Transit scheme along the edge of the Thames at Kennetmouth on grounds of loss of amenity, transport, climate, air quality and wildlife impacts. The ERMRT was refused planning permission by Wokingham Borough but the Park and Ride site was built - but initially not used. The latest attempt to find a use for it is to serve RBH and the RailAir coach service to Heathrow. <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/news/2023/new-airport-and-hospital-park-and-rides-take>

Reading Cycle Campaign:

Latest newsletter is at <https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/autumn-2023-newsletter/> - includes the Autumn report from Reading lead campaigner which is at <https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/rbc-autumn-report-2023/> .

New Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero

Claire Coutinho has been the Conservative MP for East Surrey since 2019. She studied mathematics and philosophy at Oxford so we can expect she is numerate and understands exponential growth and mathematical modelling. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claire_Coutinho#

According to this article "Coutinho's apparent green leanings will give hope to climate activists and renewable energy bosses" <https://www.politico.eu/article/new-uk-energy-secretary-has-distinct-shades-of-green/>

"Good riddance to Grant Shapps ... The country needs a serious secretary of state ... We hope Claire Coutinho will be that person." said Dave Timms, head of political affairs at environmental campaign group Friends of the Earth.

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

Climate Change - Climate Justice - Lecture Series in a Wokingham church

Meetings on five Thursdays starting on 14th September with Sir Brian Hoskins and concluding on 23rd November. On 12th October Wokingham Borough Council discuss their Climate Emergency Action Plan. <https://spauls.co.uk/the-walter-lectures/> Something similar in Reading would be welcome!

Tuesday 19th September – 18:30 at the Three Guineas. – **Eco-Anxiety: How can we thrive in challenging times?** - Ethical Reading meeting with speaker <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/eco-anxiety-how-can-we-thrive-in-challenging-times-tickets-699492720557>

Saturday 23rd September - 10.30am — 12.30pm, Photo at 11am - **Make Polluters Pay** demonstration Barclays Bank, 90 - 93 Broad Street, RG1 2AP - <https://www.facebook.com/events/991830278532207> Global Justice Reading.

Thursday 27th September -19:30 at RISC – meeting on **The Debt Crisis** - <https://www.facebook.com/events/3507634366184603> Global Justice Reading.

Friday 29th September – 10:00 to 16:00 at UoR – workshop **Life Cycle Assessment of Transport**.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/life-cycle-assessment-of-transportation-tickets-687848201487>

Saturday 30th September – 11:00 'near Brighton'. **XR South East Rising** - information and booking at

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/south-east-rising-tickets-692912328427>

Tuesday 10th October – 19:15 Maiden Place Community Centre - **Losing Eden ... why we need the wild** – talk by Lucy Jones for Earley Environmental Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/213758798814631/permalink/2229440457246445>

Saturday 14th October – 12:30 on-line - Linking nature and eating: **Why fixing our food system is critical for us and for wildlife**. Talk for BBOWT by Prof. Tim Lang and (ex-FoE) Vicky Hird. <https://www.bbowt.org.uk/nature-food>

Tuesday 24th October – 18:00 at Biscuit Factory - **Growing out of Our Troubled Civilization** – films and discussion with Transition Town Reading <http://ergobalance.blogspot.com/2023/08/growing-out-of-our-troubled.html>

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 or on Twitter @KidicalMassRead

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

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](#)

Useful Links and General Information:

Recent links for Reading FoE stalls and campaigns: www.readingfoe.org.uk/links

Friends of the Earth 'England, Wales and Northern Ireland' <http://www.foe.co.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 13th 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 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. To join or renew, just fill in the slip below and send it off with or without your subscription to Reading FoE, 27, Instow Road, Earley, RG6 5QH. 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.