

Reading Friends of the Earth



Newsletter September-October 2024

For more info: www.readingfoe.co.uk * ...
or Facebook [Reading Friends of the Earth | Facebook](#) ...
or email info@readingfoe.co.uk ... or 'phone 07503626167.
* Note: Our new website is still under development. Our original website- still updated - is <http://www.readingfoe.org.uk> .

General Meetings: Reading FoE usually meet on the **second Wednesday of each month** either in person or on Zoom. Often in Room 1 upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 7:30 p.m. Access to RISC from London Street is via a passage to the right of the shop-front. Most meetings will be 'hybrid' - 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.

Wednesday September 11th 7:30 pm at RISC. Likely to consider local issues and government proposals for National Planning Policy Framework – see below. Will also discuss future activities, campaigns to support, 12th October Climate Day of Action, etc.

Wednesday October 9th 7:30 pm. Not yet sure what, where, when or how – aim to decide at September meeting. Trying to set up an on-line meeting with **BUND Dusseldorf** – a German FoE-linked group in Reading's 'Twin City'. Final preparations for 'Climate Day of Action'.

Fifty years on...!??

Legend has it that Reading FoE first met in 1974. Entering our second half-century we can celebrate a long history of local activities. Our January newsletter featured a campaign for cycling from 1975. March: 'Save the Whale' from 1979. May: loft insulation from c. 1979. July: a celebration of national FoE 10th birthday from 1981.

In **2006** on Thursday June 29th the FoE groups of Reading, Wokingham and Newbury hosted a public meeting in Reading Council Chamber attended by about 90 people including a number of Reading and West Berkshire Councillors and Officers. Set up by Penny Miller (Wokingham), chaired by Adrian Foster-Fletcher (Newbury), national FoE speaker Martyn Williams. 'The Big Ask' was the current slogan of the climate change campaign.

Representatives of the three major political parties - MPs Richard Benyon (Newbury, Conservative) and Martin Salter (Reading West, Labour) and Councillor Royce Longton (Liberal Democrat – West Berkshire) all called for urgent action from the government of the day. The Climate Change Act - the first global legally binding climate change mitigation target (80 per cent reduction by 2050 compared to 1990 levels) set by a country - was passed in 2008.



Public meeting in Reading Council Chamber in 2006.

Future Events and Opportunities with Reading and national FoE:

Monday 23rd September – 19:00 – **FoE South East Meet Up** on-line. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/south-east-meet-up-september-24-registration-1000080165697> “Find out more about how to effectively press for change and gain the ear of your elected representative in Parliament. Come and share your own experience or listen to others. There will also be a presentation of some **highlights of Brenda Pollack's time at Friends of the Earth**. She has supported groups in the region for over 30 years. She is leaving in October so come and say farewell.”

Tuesday 24th September – 11:00 to 16:00 – UoR Students' Union - we have a **stall at UoR Community Fair** to welcome new students to the town. Please volunteer to help if you can spare some time.

Thursday 26th September – 18:00 - national FoE webinar - **United for Warm Homes: What comes next?** – “We'll explore what government policy means for our campaign and how we can hold the government accountable, while advocating for them to go further, act faster and be fairer.”
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/x/united-for-warm-homes-what-comes-next-registration-995351201237>

Saturday 28th September – 10:00 to 15:00 - we have a stall at **Wokingham Earth Fayre** – All Saints Church, Wokingham. Please volunteer to help if you can spare some time.

Wednesday 2nd October – 18:00 - national FoE webinar **Council climate action – what next?** “An update on the changing political context, a chance to share the highs and lows from your campaign and do some forward planning together.” <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/council-climate-action-what-next-tickets-945511559527>

Saturday 12th October – ‘**Climate Day of Action**’ – many organisations in the ‘Climate Coalition’ wanting to arrange to meet MPs. Can we co-operate? FoE guidance is:

- “It's so important that your MP sees your group and local partners as key stakeholders in your community. The best way to make this happen is to secure a meeting with them. In case you haven't seen it, you can use [this template email](#) to request a meeting with your MP.”
- “Our [guide to meeting your MP](#) should have all the other information you need to prepare for your meeting. But do let us know if you have any questions that aren't answered by the guide”

Saturday 19th October - 14:00 to 16:30 - we have a stall at **Woodley St James Eco Open Afternoon**. Please volunteer to help if you can spare some time.

Recent Activities with Reading FoE:

Clean Air and Safer Transport Forum:

On 2nd July John Sharpe and John Booth attended this RBC ‘group representatives by invitation-only’ event – as reported in last newsletter.

In discussion of the **Transport Strategy update to 2040** John Booth had questioned expected 2040 indicator of 54 kt CO2 from transport, and lack of an indicated outcome for costs of congestion in Reading. It appeared the CO2 indicator was essentially a target to do better than government requirement and not based on detailed analysis or simulation. Cllr. Ennis agreed these questions were important and invited us to get back to him. An e-mail has now been sent and Cllr. Ennis has passed it to the officers for comments.

Earley Green Fair:

Chris and John ran our stall on 3rd August and spoke with a number of Councillors and interested members of the public about climate, planning and heat pumps. The Mayor of Earley is an expert on Heat Pumps!

Reading Climate Action Network - Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025-30:

At our August 14th meeting we agreed a response to their ‘Discussion Pack’ questions <https://readingcan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Discussion-Pack-Designing-a-Net-Zero-Reading-2805.pdf> and submitted it before the end of August as requested.

Steve and John joined a meeting at RISC with GREN on August 21st to address their ‘Survey 1’ questions and Tricia Marcouse has written up a GREN response which she has submitted. See

<https://www.gren.org.uk/resources/DesigningaNetZeroReading-survey1repeat.pdf> and

<https://www.gren.org.uk/resources/RCANSurvey1additions.docx> and

<https://www.gren.org.uk/resources/RCANSurvey1answers.docx>

Current Issues:

One ‘Old’ and two ‘New’ Labour MPs after General Election July 2024

Before the election we contacted candidates in ‘Reading West and Mid Berkshire’, ‘Reading Central’, and ‘Earley and Woodley’ with results of our Warm Homes petition. All these constituencies have some or all voters within Reading Borough so we propose to engage with their MPs.

At our August meeting we made the following comments:

- Matt Rodda – Labour - Reading Central - generally thought well of – responsive to communications – former Shadow Minister for Transport (Buses). Enrico and Chris are constituents.
- Olivia Bailey – Labour - Reading West and Mid Berkshire – newly elected – has worked for Keir Starmer – had attended RFoE May 2024 meeting by Zoom. Graham Hudson is a constituent.
- Yuan Yang – Labour – Earley and Woodley – newly elected – economist – had given on-line talk on ‘Doughnut Economics’ to Fabians. Had responded very positively to our ‘Reading for Warm Homes’ pre-election e-mail and had recalled meeting some of us at our Earley Green Fair stall in 2023. John is a constituent.

We were concerned about support for farming – now the EU funding model had been replaced and imported labour was more difficult to obtain. Also about Labour proposals to Get Britain Building Again to kickstart economic growth. More homes are needed but it is not simple. Market reform and government funding and regulation will be needed to achieve just and sustainable solutions.

National Planning Policy Framework

The government has proposed changes to the NPPF - out for consultation until 24th September – and has launched a ‘New Towns Task Force’ to find possible sites for new housing.

The proposed method of calculating numbers of new homes will radically change the numbers of homes local authorities must include in their Local Plans – taking more account of ‘affordability’ – increasing numbers if prices are more than four times local salaries.

Calculated Annual Numbers of New Homes			
Local Authority	Current Method	Proposed Method	Increase %
Wokingham	748	1308	75%
Reading	878	1023	16.6%
West Berkshire	495	1057	114%

NPPF revised version and consultation are at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>

Solutions to the national ‘housing crisis’ must be achievable and effective and environmentally and economically sustainable whilst addressing the urgent need to improve housing for people who currently live in overcrowded and/or poor quality homes as highlighted in our Reading for Warm Homes petition.

Should we question the proposed ‘affordability-based’ formula? It seems far too simplistic and likely to ignore many key issues such as jobs, demographics, transport, wildlife, water supplies, agriculture, local food supplies etc. etc.

West Berkshire Planning – especially Pincents Hill

West Berkshire has recently added the Pincents Hill site to those to be considered for housing in the current Local Plan Examination. <https://westberks.gov.uk/article/43212/Sites-for-new-homes-submitted-to-Planning-Inspector> It provides great views of trees and countryside from A4/M4, has wildlife interest, and is a green corridor into Calcot/Tilehurst.

Olivia Bailey MP has recently voiced opposition on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/OliviaBailey4RWMB> - well worth reading her comments – and Tilehurst Parish Council has a meeting to discuss NPPF and Pincents Hill on 10th September http://www.tilehurstparishcouncil.gov.uk/UserFiles/Files/Agendas/0-Agenda_10_September_2024.pdf Opposition Facebook group has recently changed its name to ‘Pincents Hill Against Development’ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/411390033427248/>

Also West Berkshire is holding a public ‘**Planning Forum**’ on 10th September where Pincents Hill and the changes to NPPF may well be raised. <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/43214/Next-Community-Forum-announced> . This is both in-person and on-line and should be informative.

Wokingham Local Plan and Hall Farm Development

The imminent release of the Wokingham Local Plan Update for consultation before submission to the government inspectors will present issues. The previously proposed Hall Farm ‘garden village’ (4,500 homes) south of Earley proposed a bridge over the M4 to the B3270 in Earley and perhaps an M4 junction. It would have significant impact on local transport, infrastructure, services, employment and resources and take a large area of farmland. See opposition group <https://www.green4grow.org/> - proposing a demonstration at Council’s Shute End offices in 19th September.

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

25th September – 19:30 at RISC Cafe – Global Justice Reading - film screening: ‘**A crude mistake? Uganda's oil rush and the fight for climate justice**’. In this documentary, People & Power investigates what major new oil projects in Uganda mean for the country, its people and the environment. <https://www.facebook.com/events/8038476996248875/>

14th October – Transition Town Reading – ‘**Wilding**’ film about Knepp re-wilding to be shown at Biscuit Factory. <https://transitiontownreading.wordpress.com/> - not sure what admission price will be or if booking advisable.

17th October – 20:00 - **Flooding in the Pang Valley** – a discussion on the context and prevention, with Kay Lacey, flood warden for Pangbourne, Prof. Nigel Arnell, the University Reading. Run by PAWS group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/paws-pangbourne-whitchurch-sustainability-1305707616244014/> Probably Pangbourne Village Hall – check!

Green Drinks – usually on the first Tuesday of every month in the Castle Tap – see [Reading Green Drinks | Facebook](#)

People Planet Pint: an informal social meet up, primarily aimed at people involved in sustainability. Reading will now have its own PPP on the second Thursday of the month, next on 12th September at 18:00. Milk Bar, 8 Merchants Place, Reading RG1 1DT. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/reading-small99s-people-planet-pinttm-sustainability-meetup-tickets-923173094577>

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. ... Rides on the last Friday of the month. Leave at 19:30 from the Civic Offices in Bridge Street. Leisurely ride for about an hour and a half finishing at pub. Not sure if still happening. Check before you go! <https://criticalmassreading.wordpress.com/> doesn't seem to be updated ???

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/>

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’ <https://friendsoftheearth.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>

Newbury Friends of the Earth – Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/755866711218545/>

Reading FoE Officers etc.

Our 2024 AGM on April 10th elected Enrico Petrucco to continue in the post of Co-ordinator and Paolo Turati to continue in the post of 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 newsletters (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. We aim to provide a regular free of charge newsletter to keep members up to date with the group's activities.

We need funds to cover meeting room hire, zoom licence, website costs, and campaign expenses. Contributions of perhaps £10 a year would be greatly appreciated.

To contribute please:

- if you use PayPal go to <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/readingfoe>
- to pay by bank transfer request our bank account details by e-mail to info@readingfoe.co.uk
- or pay cash or cheque at a meeting or event