

Reading Friends of the Earth Annual Report

April 2013 to March 2014

The Bee Cause:

There has been a focus on activities related to the Bee Cause this year. On Beanpole day, 20th of April, in Caversham Court Gardens we held a stall next to the reading Bee Keepers Association. Our presence was recorded in both local newspapers and we attracted a good number of signatories calling for a national Bee Action Plan. In June we held stalls at MERL Spring Fair, Reading University BioBlitz, and Waterfest where continued support work on the Bee Cause gained further public support for a national Bee Action Plan. We learned that Rob Wilson MP had attended the "Bees Tea" in Westminster on the 16th of May and he signed the statement calling for a national Bee Action Plan. At this point Rob had already received 261 postcards from the public as a result of our campaign work.

We held further stalls at Caversham Festival, the Earley Green Fair, Ufton Court Open Day, the Town Meal Debate, the Town Meal, Reading Neighborhood Network AGM, and the Farmers' Market. We also organised a Bee Walk in Caversham Court Gardens led by ecologist Ivan Wright, which was attended by 54 people and was covered in the press.

We organised the screening of the film 'What's Killing Our Bees' at RISC on Sept 1st followed by a Q&A sessions with two Reading University Researchers featured in the film. We also organised the screening of 'More Than Honey' at RISC on December 1st which was attended by an audience of about 25 people including bee-keepers and biologists.

Consequently, the actions of Friends of the Earth (including Reading FoE) have helped to drive work in the Government which has opened public consultation on a National Pollinators Strategy on March 6th of this year and will close on May 2nd.

Other Activities:

Additional activities have involved hosting a few talks and participating in consultation with local government.

A talk on Shale Gas given by group member Joanna Hanson focussed on social management of shale gas making a case study from actions in Poland. Joanna raised a series of key points, one of which found that acceptance of local shale gas extraction can coincide with using a community compensation fund for investing in local renewable energy production as a community scheme.

We hosted a talk by Dr. Phil Coker of UoR during which he outlined scientifically derived data on the variability of renewable resources and the implications this has for energy systems operation. Phil discussed solutions to manage these problems including the use of non-renewable energy generation to fill in for the shortfall of renewable energy generation as it is predictably variable and not

particularly intermittent (predictable slow changes with minimal sudden large unpredicted changes).

As part of Reading Climate Change Partnership's Climate Change Strategy, member John Booth has taken responsibility on behalf of Reading FoE for two actions. One of these actions will make recommendations to Committee after reviewing existing policy capability to mitigate green space conversion into parking. The other action will produce a briefing for multi-agency use in publicity on the economic benefits of green infrastructure for adapting to climate change.

John has also led the process for our group consultation response on Reading's Cycle Strategy, which was partly informed by Reading Cycle Campaign.

Enrico Petrucco

9th April 2014