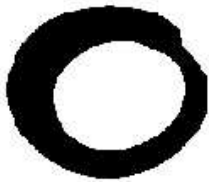


Reading Friends of the Earth Newsletter

Jan/Feb 2005

For Information contact John on 0118 9868260, john@booths.clara.net



**Friends of
the Earth**

EVENTS DIARY

General Meetings:

Reading FoE usually meet on second Wednesday of each month, upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 8 p.m.

Weds. 12th January:

General meeting. Working on ideas for "Reading Green Day", review of Climate Challenge, and preparation for South East Regional Framework consultation.

Wednesday 9th February:

Rebecca Smith – FoE South-East Local Groups Network Developer - will visit us.

Other dates of interest:

21st January (Friday)
Maidenhead FoE Quiz – 7:30 for 7:45 – see text.

29th January – FoE Regional Gathering – London – see text.

12th February - Saturday – "Reading Green Day" – see text.

26th February – SEFS (South East Forum Sustainability) meeting in London with a speaker on South East Plan (provisional – details from John)

Freedom of Information

The Environmental Information Regulations (2004) are now in force giving the public the right to request information from local authorities, waste companies, utilities and others.

Information may be withheld on a limited set of grounds and only after the public interest has been considered. There is a right to a free appeal to the Information Commissioner if information is refused.

Draft EIR code of practice is at www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/eir-guidance

Reading Green Day – RISC on Saturday 12th February

This is to be an open day for Reading's Green Groups and individuals run by Reading Green Party. A mixture of workshops and other activities and stalls and information.

The detailed timetable is not yet available. Participants include:

Greenpeace
Friends of the Earth
Amnesty International
Berkshire Organic Gardeners
Brian Jensen (on the destruction of rainforests).

The Green Party

FoE South East Regional Gathering

This is on 29th January at the Conway Hall, London and starts at 11:00 a.m.

It's a gathering for London, South-East and East of England local groups and should be a very timely meeting on the choices facing the whole of the South-East corner of England.

Proposed agenda includes: keynote address by Tony Juniper, FoE's Executive Director; Regional breakout sessions with Regional Campaigns Co-ordinators; Skills sharing breakout sessions (Media, Campaigning, Planning); and networking on the following issues:

- *The growth agenda;
- *How to develop and expand local groups
- *Local campaigning on climate change

The day should be really helpful for campaigning in terms of getting inspiration, information, contacts and skills.

Contact Ulrik to book a place by mid January.

Kennet Valley Park

The Prudential's proposals to build on the area to the north of the M4 would deprive local people of a large part of their 'Green Wedge' and take out some of Berkshire's Nightingale nest-sites – and who would want to live so close to the M4 anyway?

Further meetings have been held to develop opposition. We should all try to make it a hot topic in the local media in 2005 and we should respond to the South East Plan consultations calling for lower housing numbers in the area.

The Pru's initial planning application is expected in 2005 after a further consultation exercise.

South East Plan:

This will set the levels of development in the Region until 2026 and will replace the Berkshire Structure Plan with a Regional document.

Consultations on general principles and scale of development will be from January to April with detailed consultation on location of development in the summer. An Examination in Public is expected in the autumn.

The South East Regional Assembly has decided that it will consult on housing numbers between continuing the present rate of building and increasing it by 25% - when central government had pressed for much higher figures.

Reading's Councillor Howarth told the local press that he favoured 40% increase in housebuilding and that lower figures would be 'economic suicide'.

In the SEERA debate on 29th November SEFS representative Chris Corrigan proposed two successful amendments on environmental footprinting.

See proposals and debate minutes transcript at: <http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/meetings/plenaries/2004/291104.html>

Reading's Local Transport Settlement

The government has rated Reading "Above Average" and awarded it £6.747 million for 2005/6.

Reading's bid for £3.3m for its Quality Bus Corridor Phase 2 was rejected because "The DfT's funds are not unlimited; it can only support the most deserving supplementary bids".

The massive expansion of M4 Junction 11 which would add about 40% extra capacity has been delayed because of lack of government funding.

The combined M4 J11 and Mere oak scheme was not funded this year because "Ministers have decided that it does not represent an immediate priority for funding within the available resources."

Councillor Howarth was reported in the Press as saying it was rejected because the Public Inquiry

into the compulsory purchase of Horseman Coaches' site had not yet reported.

Waste:

Defra has allocated Reading over £130,000 from its Waste Performance and Efficiency fund.

Reading only recycles 18% of its waste when neighbouring Wokingham achieves 25.9%. The national target is 25% by 2005/2006.

Meanwhile high-achieving councils in the recycling arena (not Reading) are having their statutory recycling targets capped at 30% by Defra in order to reduce Council Tax.

Some councils that had already been recycling high proportions of their waste were previously set recycling targets as high as 50% of their household waste by 2005/06.

Maidenhead FoE New Year Quiz:

This will be on Friday 21st January (7.30 for 7.45) at the Braywick Nature Centre, Hibbert Road, Maidenhead.

Admission is £5 and includes a buffet supper and "environmentally friendly prizes".

Team size 4-6 people – let's decide at our January meeting if we want to enter a team – so far two people have expressed interest.

Useful Websites:

www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk

www.foe.co.uk

www.rfoe.freerve.co.uk

New site for True Food Club: <http://web.onetel.net.uk/~truefood>

Renewable Energy Grants etc.: www.clear-skies.org www.solarpvgrants.co.uk

Reading Council Waste and Recycling: <http://www.reading.gov.uk/Category.asp?cat=484>

South East Forum for Sustainability: <http://www.sefs.org.uk>

Citizens Committee on Oil Peak And Decline (COPAD) www.copad.org

<http://www.fishonline.org/>

gives info on over-fishing, fish to avoid, and which are OK.

www.ejfoundation.org (Environmental Justice Foundation)

And some more on Food, Agriculture Supermarkets and GM issues:

Local Food Directory, with links: http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk/Local_Economy.htm

Berkshire Organic Gardeners: <http://www.berks-organic-gardeners.fsnet.co.uk/>

<http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/Products/GM/>

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

Reading FoE e-mail communications

We've moved our group e-mail list from readingfoe@coolist.com to readingfoe@foe.co.uk

If you would like to be on our list and join in our day-to-day communications please get in touch.

Reading FoE Subscriptions – Subscribe NOW for 2004/5 before it's too late!!

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 £5.00 / £3.00 (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 RFoE Treasurer, c/o 15 Barn Close, Reading, RG30 3EE