

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter July/Aug 2008

For more information see <http://www.readingfoe.org.uk>
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**Friends of
the Earth**

Diary:

General Meetings: Reading FoE usually meets on the second Wednesday of each month, upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 8:00 p.m. **BUT NOT THIS JULY.**

July 9th: Bike Ride to Green Park Turbine - 7:15 for 7:30 departure from London Street outside RISC, ride to turbine for about 8:00, Ian Gough will meet us there to tell us about the turbine, then we go for a drink – probably to Cuning Man at Burghfield ... cyclists will need lights. If wet stay at RISC. Non-cyclists welcome to use other means.

August 13th: General Meeting - 8:00 p.m. at RISC – likely to plan final stages of bio-fuels campaign, discuss report of Reading Transport Commission, look at Conference resolutions, etc.

Other FoE Activities:

Saturday 19th July – 11:00 to 13:00 – Biofuels Day of Action, Broad Street – volunteers needed to help bring our biofuels campaign to the streets of Reading.

Saturday 2nd August – 10:00 to 15:00 – Earley Green Fair – volunteers needed for all or part of the day to help in our gazebo. This is a Council-run event in Earley in the nature reserve by the lake off Beech Lane. Activities to be centred on publicising biofuels issues and the general work of FoE. Hope to run Bio-Fuels Skittles (see below).

Other Activities:

Thursday 31st July – meeting in evening of groups opposed to Kennet Valley Park – details via e-mail later.

Sunday 3rd to 11th August – Climate Camp – Camp for Climate Action, Kingsnorth, Kent. Collective organisation, workshops and direct action. Incorporates a **Day of Action Against Biofuels, Wednesday 6th August**. See <http://www.climatecamp.org.uk> for details.

Summer of Agrofuel Action

To effectively tackle climate change, protect biodiversity and help improve social justice, Friends of the Earth are campaigning this summer to exclude the biofuels targets from the EU Renewable Energy Directive. We will directly lobby MEPs for a commitment that will exclude the 10% biofuels target. So far we've run successful stalls at Forbury Fever and Water Fest asking the public to sign cards to their MEP, with over 160 taking this action so far.



A feature of the Forbury event was a skittles game for children called "Orang's Last Stand". The aim was to save Orang, his trees, and our bread by knocking over the Evil Biofuel Pumps

Biofuels (also known as agrofuels) appear an easy option for politicians who want to tackle climate change. However, crop based biofuels create many complications instead of providing a real energy solution. The EU Renewable Energy Directive calls for 10% biofuel in all road fuels by 2020. The main routes to meet that goal would require imports from either EU sources or other more distant large producers. EU sourced rape seed oil diesel has been shown to contribute 70% more to climate change than its fossil fuel equivalent, due to fertilizer use, and most other producers are initiating a competition between food and energy that has already begun to damage the lives of the world's poor.

Instead of subsidising current biofuels, the EU should fund more research into sustainable biofuels and tighten emissions limits for vehicles. In Reading we must alleviate car dependence through better planning decisions, public transport provision, and quieter

streets where adults and children can walk and cycle in safety. This will genuinely reduce carbon emissions and improve fuel security, while bringing many health and social benefits besides. Together we can help solve the world's energy problems without depleting our food supplies or accelerating climate change. The Renewable Energy Directive will help reach these aims without a 10% biofuels target.

- Biodiesel comes from soya, rapeseed, palm and cottonseed. Bioethanol (used in petrol) comes from maize, sugar cane, sugar beet and wheat.
- Petrol and diesel contain 2.5% biofuel currently, rising to 5.75% by the end of 2010. If that 5.75% was produced domestically, it would need roughly 20% of UK arable land
- The EU proposes a rise to 10% by 2020; the industry is lobbying for 25% (!) by 2030
- Conventionally-farmed rapeseed and maize biodiesels have been calculated to produce up to 70 per cent and 50 percent **more** greenhouse gas respectively than fossil fuels.
- Palm oil produced through deforestation produces 10 times more CO₂ than burning mineral oil. Indonesia is the world's third largest carbon emitter as a result of deforestation.
- The UN estimates 5 million people in Indonesia could be displaced by palm oil production.
- Filling the 25-gallon tank of an SUV with ethanol requires over 450 pounds of corn - enough calories to feed one person for a year; the IMF estimates that biofuels have caused 20-30% of recent food price rises.

Running your car on used cooking oil

Many thanks to Adrian Windisch (Reading Green Party) for coming to our June meeting to give a talk and lead a lively discussion about sustainable biofuels. George Monbiot estimates that only 1/360th of our demand for transport fuel could be met by used cooking oil, but it's nevertheless probably the greenest way to run your car. See Adrian's blog for more information: <http://greenreading.blogspot.com/2008/06/biofuels.html>

Plastic Bags Campaign Success!

Waitrose (Tilehurst, Oxford Road) is introducing a "No Bag" till only for customers who have brought their own bags with them, thanks to the perseverance of Reading FoE activist Muriel Parsons. Will other stores follow suit?

Reading Station Hill Development

Reading FoE made a representation to the Planning Inspectorate following the calling-in of the planned Station Hill redevelopment by the government. Our main concern is that the large amount of extra office space will aggravate the jobs/housing imbalance in Reading and in central Berkshire and will give rise to higher demand for transportation and pressure on housing, making it harder for Reading to achieve a sustainable low-carbon economy. Development of this area should give much higher priority to key leisure and civic functions appropriate to Reading's location as the transport hub at the heart of the Thames Valley.

Reading's Climate Change Strategy

Reading FoE responded to the Council's draft 'Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan' for Reading, welcoming it in principle and making suggestions for improvement.

Waste

The energy-from-waste plant at 'Lakeside Energy From Waste' (aka Colnbrook near Slough) has been delayed for a year by technical problems and should now open in July 2009. Waste from Reading was due to go to the plant.

Planning Bill

Martin Salter MP did not join with Labour rebels but voted with the government against an amendment to this Bill that would have climate change to be taken into account in planning decisions for major projects such as roads, airports and power stations.

Independent Transport Commission reports

Reading's Transport Commission report was released on Tuesday 1st July. Proposals include: Oyster-style cards for buses, "Premier" bus routes, and more park-and-ride schemes; a third bridge over the Thames and tolls on existing bridges (it stopped short of recommending a bridge solely for cycling, walking and public transport); and road pricing to control demand and deter through-traffic. Reading FoE had pressed the commission for road-user charging, so it is encouraging to see support for this. The report correctly highlighted the need for local authorities to work together, raising the possibility of a Local Transport Authority for the greater Reading area. There was nothing new for zero-carbon forms of transport such as walking and cycling though. Noticeable by its absence was a call for 20mph limits on residential streets, despite support from environmental and cycling groups in Reading. Now Portsmouth has extended its 20mph limits to nearly all residential roads, surely it is time for Reading to consider this measure too? Parts of this report will be useful to Reading FoE and other groups campaigning on transport issues in Reading, but the commission missed an opportunity by focusing mainly on congestion, and had nothing to recommend regarding safety and pollution (noise, local air and CO₂), despite these being raised by a number of respondents. The full report can be found here: <http://www.reading.gov.uk/transportcommission>

Useful Websites:

www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk
www.foe.co.uk

A Yahoo Group to co-ordinate opposition to Kennet Valley Park has been started at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SaveKennetMeadows/>

Greater Reading Environmental Network
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ReadingEnvNetwork/>

True Food Co-op: www.truefood.coop

Reading Borough Council Waste and Recycling:
<http://www.reading.gov.uk/environmentandplanning/wasteandrecycling/>

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, etc.

www.ejfoundation.org (Environmental Justice Foundation)

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/reading_freecycle – Freecycle is basically a site (and e-mail list) on which to advertise stuff you don't want but don't want any money for.

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/>

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

Reading FoE e-mail communications

If you would like to be on our mailing list and join in our day-to-day communications please email info@readingfoe.org.uk.

Reading FoE Subscriptions – Subscribe NOW for 2008/9

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 £7.00 / £4.00 (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: _____

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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 43 Armour Hill, Tilehurst, Reading RG31 6JP