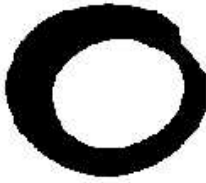


Reading Friends of the Earth Newsletter

Mar/Apr 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. 9th March:

General meeting with South East Plan focus –see text.

Wednesday 13th April:

Short AGM plus review of Climate Change issues and campaign proposals.

Other dates of interest:

17th March – Maidenhead FoE meeting on Night Flights – see text.

18th March – Bracknell FoE pre-election meeting with politicians – see text.

19th March (Saturday) – Berkshire FoE AGM: see text: RISC– 13:00 to 17:00 – meet for lunch from 12:00.

19-20 March – RESCUE

26th March – FoE Climate Change Day – London.

31st March - Thursday – SE Plan / Local Development meeting 19:15 (?) – Civic Offices – see text.

Kennet Valley Park – Stop the Sprawl and Flood Risk in Reading

The campaign against the Prudential's proposals to build 7,500 homes on the area to the north of the M4 and west of the Basingstoke Line has been greatly strengthened by Martin Salter M.P. declaring himself against the development on the grounds that the Environment Agency believes the risk of flooding is too great.

The Pru's plans include major works to turn Theale Lake into a holding reservoir for floodwater but campaigners argue that the risks of building in a functional floodplain are too great and would leave the authorities with on-going responsibilities and costs.

A major public meeting is to be held at 19:15 on Thursday 31st March in the Reading Council Chamber. (There is some chance this may start a little later – best to check if you haven't had confirmation).

It will cover the SE Plan's housing proposals, the value of the site for wildlife, the risks of flooding, and the long history of fighting development in the Kennet Meadows area.

Speakers are expected to include Martin Salter M.P.,

Cllr. Peter Ruhemann, Colin Wilson of Reading Ornithological Club, John Booth (Reading FoE) and local residents.

Please try to attend this meeting to help to make the public launch of the KVP campaign a major event.

Contact John for more details.

South East Plan:

The Plan, which can be viewed in libraries or on www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan, contains proposals for housing, transport, environment and the economy for the twenty years to 2026.

There is a consultation on Strategy until 15th April, then in July a consultation on District-level housing numbers.

Further consultations and an Examination in public will take place in 2006.

However the end result may be strongly influenced by the public response to the consultation.

There are many good policies in the Plan and many that could be improved (see briefing documents attached).

However the proposed 3% p.a. level of economic growth – in a region whose environmental footprint is 29 times its land area – can only be achieved by increasing the working population and therefore the demand for green field housing.

The Plan consults on three levels of housing growth for the region – each of which may either be distributed around the 9 sub-regions in accordance with present trends or with a ‘sharper focus’.

Neither distribution is informed by available capacity for relatively sustainable housing growth – and ‘sharper focus’ loads extra development on sub-regions according to their number of major transport hubs and larger settlements – there is no concept of ‘full’. There is some allowance for Green Belt land but none for National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Berkshire is in the ‘Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley’ (WC&BV) sub-region which attracts more than a third of the ‘sharper focus’ re-distribution under which it could provide 18% of the new homes in the South East.

Under the higher growth / ‘sharper focus’ scenario WC&BV would have to have housing growth 27% above present growth rates and far above the capacity of the urban areas.

To respond it is best to write directly to Secretariat, SEERA,

Berkeley House, Cross Lanes, Guildford or e-mail plan@southeast-ra.gov.uk rather than to use the consultation form or the website which limit the scope of responses.

Stop Press: Naomi led a successful discussion on the Plan at the Borough’s Green City Forum on 28th February. This was minuted and will be taken forward by RBC.

Reading Green Day

On Saturday February 12th many green groups in Reading gathered at RISC.

A presentation from Reading FOE gathered a crowd of around 25 people.

After a short introduction from Ulrik, Caroline got everybody to test how sustainable their lifestyle was by calculating their footprint.



We finished with John talking about how the South East plan will affect our local area.

We got many questions and comments to all parts so we rated the event as a success.

There were presentations from many other groups and even more groups

with stalls in the big hall.

The end of the day had a theatre on a possible 3rd Thames bridge in Reading. After running through the short performance once it was repeated with the audience suggesting changes and giving comments. The acting was great and it was fun while at the same giving a good insight to the issues around a 3rd Thames bridge.

The day was organised by the Reading Green Party who did a very good job. Thanks to Rob for putting so much energy into this.

FoE Regional Gathering

This was on 29th January in London. Chris, Ulrik and John enjoyed a stimulating day including a presentation on Climate Change from Tony Juniper (FOE’s Executive Director) and the opportunity to get first-hand information from many other FoE staff.

Tony said that the economic costs and the security/proliferation risks of nuclear power meant that there were better ways to tackle climate change. He thought carbon sequestration (pumping carbon dioxide into disused oil wells) was

worth considering but could not yet be relied upon.

Key points to emerge were that FoE were considering the whole of London and the South-East and East of England for planning purposes but had not yet reached a position on optimum housing numbers for the regions.

The Barker Report Recommendation 9 - proposals to trigger the automatic release of extra land for housing if house prices rose above a threshold or employment growth outstripped housing growth - were seen as a threat to the environment, to sound planning, and to local democracy.

Night Buses Cut?

Reading Buses appear to have axed the N8 night bus service leaving the Bath Road and parts of Tilehurst without an evening and night service.

Group representatives at the Transport Users Forum will try to find out what's going on ...

'Phone Mast Defeated

Muriel has led a group of residents to defeat proposals for a 50-foot 'phone mast at the junction of New Lane Hill and the Bath Road in the West Berkshire District.

The objection was primarily on grounds of visual amenity and Reading Borough also objected. Muriel said "these things shouldn't just be rubber-stamped."

While this was not a FoE initiative Muriel used the opportunity to get FoE mentioned in a large article in the Chronicle.

Recycling – try a Free Pint!

There are a mass of links on Recycling at <http://www.freepint.com/issues/240205.htm#feature>

Also if you find you're emptying lots of tetra-packs here's where you can find out how to recycle them:

http://www.drinkscartons.com/docs/recycling_uk.htm

You have to pay the postage and there are no collection hubs in the south-east – that might be something to tackle the council about!

You can send drinks packaging to Smith Anderson & Co Ltd
Fettykil Mills
Leslie
Fife
KY6 3AQ

On the down side some of the waste seems to go into fast food carrier bags which is not that good.

RESCUE 2005:

The annual "Rivers & Environmental Spaces Clean Up Event" (RESCUE) of Reading will this year take place on March 19-20.

It may be a corner of an estate where litter tends to gather or a hard to reach green space which needs a thorough deep clean.

Reading Borough Council sponsors and co-ordinates RESCUE and will supply litter-pickers, rubbish bags and gloves to people taking part and arrange for rubbish collected to be taken away.

RESCUE is trying to identify areas for cleaning so give them a call on the number below with your suggestions.

Ulrik has taken part in this event before and it really helps to get the litter away from the local area. His hope this year to clean up the area around Tilehurst station.

If you are interested in taking part call the council on (0118) 939 0100 during office hours. they will advise you on who is involved in your local area. Young volunteers will get certificates to thank them for their efforts in helping make Reading cleaner and greener.

Berkshire FoE AGM

Berkshire FoE is a network for the five groups in the County.

Our AGM this year (see diary) is likely to include: group reports; yet more focus on SE Plan; General Election opportunities; plus workshop from Rebecca Smith (SE Network Co-ordinator).

Meet for lunch in Global Café at RISC from 12:00.

"More Night Flights?- make your voice heard"

Maidenhead Friends of the Earth and Berkshire CPRE are holding a public meeting on Thursday March 17th from 8pm.
United Reform Church, West St., Maidenhead.

Speakers: John Stewart of HACAN and Gill Kirk of BAA. Chairman: Tony Juniper, Director, FOE UK

Bracknell FoE Meet Local Candidates

A 'Great Environmental Debate' – to which local politicians have been invited – will be held on March 18th at Coopers Hill Centre, Bracknell from 8 to 9:45 p.m.
Contact Paul on 01344 482928.

Freecycle

<http://freecycle.org> has links to UK groups – it is basically a site on which to advertise stuff you don't want – but don't want any money for.

Useful Websites:

www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk

www.foe.co.uk

www.rfoe.freeserve.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 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.