

# Reading Friends of the Earth

## Newsletter May/June 2008

For more information see <http://www.readingfoe.org.uk>  
email [info@readingfoe.org.uk](mailto:info@readingfoe.org.uk) or 'phone 0118 9868260.



**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.

**May 14<sup>th</sup>: General Meeting** at RISC – to include preparation for Forbury Fever (below); discussion of response to Council's Climate Change Strategy; and a brief overview of some planning and sustainability issues from a University lecturer.

**June 11<sup>th</sup>: General Meeting** at RISC – to include a visit from Adrian Windisch to tell us about his practical experiences with bio-fuels – fuelling a vehicle from waste oil.

**July 9<sup>th</sup>:** Watch this space – we often go for a bike ride in July so meeting may not be at RISC.

### Other FoE Activities:

**Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> May – Forbury Fever** – volunteers needed for all or part of the day to help in our gazebo. This is a Council-run event in The Forbury aimed at children as well as adults. Activities to be centred on publicising biofuels issues and the general work of FoE.

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> June – Waterfest** – volunteers needed for all or part of the day to help on our stall. This is a Council-run event on Kennetside by Homebase with lots of boats and Jazz. Activities as for Forbury Fever.

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### Climate Change Bill

This Bill – the focus of our 'Big Ask' campaign over recent years – should soon start its passage through the Commons. Many useful changes to the government's draft have been made in the Lords.

Our event in Broad Street on April 5<sup>th</sup> concentrated on the aviation issue – emissions from flying are still not included in the Bill's framework and targets. A member impersonating Gordon Brown held a large cardboard airliner labelled 'Missing' while a poster said 'Don't Ignore Aviation'. The public were supportive as we gave them leaflets and postcards. Lots of young people wanted us to give them our model aeroplanes, two of which were last seen 'flying' down Broad Street.

We succeeded in giving an interview on 210FM and had a picture and short article in the Evening Post.

### Reading's Climate Change Strategy

Reading FoE was represented at a Council 'Climate Scrutiny Panel' – a meeting of Councillors with an invited audience to launch the draft 'Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan' for Reading. Councillor Waite said the Council "should do all that we can as soon as we can." Prof. Arnell from the University reviewed the scientific background. George Marshall from COIN in Oxford said that responding to climate change had to stop being a green issue and become an issue for everyone and for all aspects of Council activities – in particular planning and development control.

The Council's document is now out for public consultation until 31<sup>st</sup> May – see

<http://www.reading.gov.uk/environmentandplanning/airqualityandclimatechange/climatechange/General.asp?id= SX9452-A7832665>

Any action on climate change is to be welcomed at this stage – this document should be seen as the start of an on-going process. We can all respond as individuals, and make a Reading FoE response, and contribute to a proposed response by the Greater Reading Environmental Network <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ReadingEnvNetwork/>

### **Moving Swiftly On:**

Best wishes to Amy our co-ordinator who has moved to a new job with a charity in London. She seems to have packed a great deal of activity into a mere year as our co-ordinator – not only admirably managing our relationship with London but leading us into Forbury Fever, plastic bags, Hawaiian pollution, litter-picking, a public meeting on climate change, and airliners in Broad Street – and all with a smile! (And I'm sure I've forgotten a lot.)

### **Forbury Fever and Waterfest:**

We have decided to focus our public events this summer around Friends of the Earth's Summer of Agrofuel Action. Along the theme of palm oil/biofuel/deforestation/orang-utan, we plan to set up our stall 'tombola style' with everyday products and ask people to guess which ones they think contain palm oil. Mike has kindly offered to lend us a couple of Orangutan suits so we hope to draw in quite a crowd and once again this will be a very child-friendly stall. For more information on this, please see the April/May 08 edition of Change Your World [http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/newsletters/cyw\\_69\\_apr\\_may\\_2008.pdf](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/newsletters/cyw_69_apr_may_2008.pdf)

### **Local Election Results:**

The local election has left Reading with 'No Overall Control' so it is uncertain at the moment what policies any ruling administration will follow. The Green Party's Rob White came second in Park Ward by only 20 votes so surely all the other parties will now pay more attention to the importance of environmental issues.

### **Eco-Town for Oxfordshire?**

The government has produced a short-list of sites for 'eco-towns' – part of its proposed solution to the demand for extra housing that it believes should be met. As well as questioning the true scale of demand for housing we can question whether eco-towns will really be the most sustainable solution to any housing shortage. While the buildings themselves may be low-energy or even 'zero-carbon' (whatever that means) these relatively small green-field settlements in the countryside seem likely to be merely dormitory towns with residents commuting considerable distances to find attractive employment.

No eco-towns are currently proposed for Berkshire but there is one for Oxfordshire, at Weston-on-the-Green, 15,000 homes 'conveniently' situated at the junction of the M40, A34 and A41. Not only is this ideally placed for commuting to Oxford or Bicester – or anywhere on the M40 – but it covers part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest - ancient hay meadows, brimming with a wide range of wild flowers including fragrant and green-winged orchids - and a Nature Reserve owned by Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire WildlifeTrust who strongly oppose the proposals. <http://www.bbowl.org.uk/content.asp?did=23908> BBOWT ask people to respond to the government consultation on proposed eco-towns. Details of the consultation can be accessed at: [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk) .

### **It's the Economy, Stupid!**

As the world watches the sub-prime mortgage saga unfold, the richest man in the world, Warren Buffet, was quoted in The Guardian as saying "There are these primeval urges in wanting to get rich, and wanting to believe in the tooth fairy. Some stupid things were done which won't be done again soon."

An article in the latest New Economics Foundation newsletter reminded readers that awareness of the conflict between economic growth and environmental sustainability dates back at least to John Stewart Mill in 1848. "If the earth must lose that great portion of its pleasantness which it owes to things that the unlimited increase of wealth and population would extirpate from it, for the purpose of enabling it to support a larger, but not necessarily a happier population, I sincerely hope for the sake of posterity, that they will content [growth] to be stationary, long before necessity compels them to it." "A stationary condition of capital and population implies no stationary state of human improvement."

Today we read about the conflict between use of land for food production and for biofuels. Mill was concerned that growth of population and economy might create a world "from which solitude is extirpated" and "every flowery waste or pasture ploughed up. All quadrupeds or birds which are not domesticated for man's use exterminated as his rivals for food."

Government projections are for UK population growth to 70 million by 2028, nearly half of the increase over the next ten years being due to net immigration <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/pproj1007.pdf>.

A House of Lords Select Committee report found that "immigration had very small impacts on GDP per capita" and "Arguments in favour of high immigration to defuse the "pensions time bomb" do not stand up to scrutiny". <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200708/ldselect/ldeconaf/82/82.pdf> .

Perhaps we should be calling for a 'Stern Report' on global population to investigate whether the UK is a sustainable long-term location for population growth?

## Useful Websites:

[www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk](http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk)  
[www.foe.co.uk](http://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](http://www.truefood.coop)

### [Reading Borough Council Waste and Recycling](#)

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

Citizens Committee on Oil Peak And Decline (COPAD) [www.copad.org](http://www.copad.org)

<http://www.fishonline.org/> gives info. on over-fishing, fish to avoid, etc.

[www.ejfoundation.org](http://www.ejfoundation.org) (Environmental Justice Foundation)

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/reading\\_freecycle](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](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](mailto: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: \_\_\_\_\_

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: \_\_\_\_\_

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