

Reading Friends of the Earth

Newsletter Jan-Feb 2026

For more information our website is at: www.readingfoe.co.uk ...
or Facebook [Reading Friends of the Earth | Facebook](#) ...
or email info@readingfoe.co.uk ** ... or 'phone 07503626167.
** Our former e-mail address info@readingfoe.org.uk has been discontinued.



General Meetings: Reading FoE aim to meet every month - usually in person but occasionally on Zoom. Often in a pub or at RISC, 35-39 London Street (access to RISC from London Street is via a passage to the right of the shop-front). Most meetings at RISC will be 'hybrid' and we are investigating options for other venues - please request a Zoom link if you have not received one and would like to attend that way. Most meetings discuss plans and general topics - some have a particular focus or guest speakers.

Monday 12th January 2026 7:30 pm - Castle Tap, Castle Street, <https://thecastletap.co.uk/>

General meeting in the 'back room' – discuss current issues and priorities, make plans for future activities. We are urgently looking for people to help fully or partially fulfil some group roles so please come along or get in touch if you would like to help with environmental campaigns in and around Reading. We need your support for current campaigns and/or to start work on new issues that concern you – and also help with our newsletter and general communications.

February meeting - not yet fixed – to be decided at or after January meeting

We hope to arrange a public meeting with GWR to talk to us about their successful trial of battery electric trains and their future in the Reading area. GWR are aiming to replace diesel trains on branch lines where full electrification is uneconomical.

Looking back at 2025

Public meetings:

As well as group meetings' – usually in the Castle Tap - we arranged three public meetings. More details on these are in previous newsletters and on our website:

- February public meeting. **“Sustainable Allotments”** – a talk by John Sharpe. Well attended.
- June: **“Will a Heat Pump Work for Me?”** - public meeting at RISC. Well attended.
- October: – Ben Burfoot (Sustainability Manager RBC) on **“Low Carbon Heating for Reading”** – public meeting at Friends Meeting House – quite well attended.

Earley Green Fair – August.

Open-air stall – included a meeting with **Yuan Yang MP** and Berkshire Greenpeace to discuss issues. Her messages were: to get lots of constituents raising issues with MPs; to keep working to inform the public; and to counter hostile propaganda.

Heat Risks

In August e-mailed lead Councillors about a FoE report on Heat Risks which classified Reading as 'High Heat and Enhanced Risk'.

Climate Emergency Plan: In the summer we submitted comments and attended meetings on Reading's draft Climate Emergency Plan – which has now been adopted. We noted the importance of increasing local publicity to counter arguments against 'Net Zero' and hope this will be taken up by RCAN outside the adopted Plan.

Oxford FoE agree this is vital - their latest newsletter says “If anyone is short of a New Year's resolution, please make it that you will “talk a bit more about the climate” to friends, family, colleagues and neighbours. Every opinion poll shows that most people in Britain are seriously worried about climate change, but many of the same polls also show that people think other people do not care so much. So we do not talk about it.”

CAST Forums (RBC - Clean Air and Safer Transport) – April, June and December - attended by John Sharpe and sometimes others – an opportunity to engage with officers and Councillors. The next CAST Forum meeting is scheduled for 31st March 2026. Detailed update from December meeting is below.

Clean Air and Safer Transport:

John Sharpe reports that the (CAST) Forum meeting held on 2nd December 2025 covered updates on air quality, electric vehicle infrastructure and transport initiatives in Reading with news for improved monitoring of particulates:

“Air quality monitoring updates: Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels have reduced over time but at some locations on Caversham Road they exceeded the limit but was reduced after distance correction to receivers. Particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) annual mean was 7µg/m³ in 2024. The target is 10µg/m³ which is above WHO of guidelines of 5 µg/m³. WHO estimates that with levels at 10µg/m³ it predicts an additional 4 deaths per 100 for all non-accidental mortality. The PM_{2.5} measurements have remained fairly constant over the last few year but there is currently only 1 site monitoring it. These emissions are less from tailpipes and more from sources such as brakes and tyres. As a result of increased electric vehicle weight this is a risk area. Plans include installing 30 new sensors in residential and high-risk areas for at least two years to understand hyper local variations. The results will be analysed by the University of Reading.

“Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) update: A contract is expected to be signed in January 2026, with an implementation plan due within three months for on street charging. Chargers will be type 2 and supplied only in areas without off-street parking, with charging costs likely higher than domestic rates and subject to biannual review. Subsidies will be available for pavement crossing channels for those without off-street parking, which cost about £500 plus a license fee, but do not guarantee parking.

“Active travel: Discussion on new cycle lanes on the A4 near Berkshire Records Office highlighted mixed opinions but the plan is to continue progressing the initiative.

“Bus service improvements and electric buses: Deployment of 24 double-decker electric buses on routes 17 and 21 by summer 2025 has been delayed until January 2026, with additional electric buses arriving in early 2026 for routes 17, 21, and 26. Audio information buttons are being installed at bus stops, and promotional fares are offered at Mereok Park and Ride.

“Active Travel Task & Finish Group recommendations: Consideration of additional demand management measures beyond Workplace Parking Levy (WPPL) and making resident parking permits and car parking priced on vehicle emissions, such as emissions-based vehicle charges for entering Reading were not considered. Otherwise it seemed like a good piece of work.

“Pedestrian crossing improvements: New pedestrian crossing lights outside Royal Berkshire Hospital have decreased wait times and improved safety for pedestrians and cyclists, with no apparent negative impact on traffic flow. “

Link to slides from RBC. [Slides](#)

Local Actions and News:

More traffic for South Berkshire? – consultation on Local Plan - open to 23rd January – see <https://www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk/objection> . This is Basingstoke & Deane Council's attempt to impose more traffic on our roads and also would impose other stresses e.g. healthcare and educational demand but no additional resources. Obviously the loss of valuable farmland and wildlife habitats are a major issues. Should we respond as a group?

Reading Local Plan Update

This is under 'examination' by a government inspector to check that after proposed changes since 2019 it is 'sound'. Our objections (submitted late December 2024) covered low carbon heating, waste management, local green space, biodiversity, air quality, and transport. The first two sessions of the examination are complete – on legal compliance and housing need and requirement. Further sessions on issues we commented on have not been announced – perhaps we will be invited to take part. <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-examination/>

Reading FoE objections are on Page 6 of https://images.reading.gov.uk/2025/05/L_P007-4-of-6-Regulation-19-representations-P-to-S.pdf Recordings of first two sessions are at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLW2GVxPNwSYyhWvZJSP_07e2c4EljSJQg

National News:

National FoE webinars, meetings etc.:

- **Local Elections** campaigns webinar – January 8th 7 pm. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/making-2026-local-elections-count-building-support-for-fair-climate-action-tickets-1935533706419>
- **Using Local Data** to power your campaigns webinar – January 13th 6 pm. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/using-local-data-to-power-your-climate-campaigns-tickets-1917879462099>
- **Planet over Profit** action guide including suggestion of a film to screen locally. <https://groups.friendsoftheearth.uk/take-action/planet-over-profit-winter-action-guide>
- **The rise of the far right** and what we do about it - webinar – 3rd February 6 pm. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-rise-of-the-far-right-and-what-we-do-about-it-registration-1977608223432>
- **Networking webinar for local groups** with Asad Rehman (FoE's new-ish CEO) – 19th February 7 pm. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/south-east-east-central-and-east-midlands-networking-webinar-tickets-1977719586522>

'National Emergency' meeting:

On 27th November, ten of the UK's leading experts briefed an invited audience of over 1,200 politicians and leaders from business, culture, faith, sport and the media with the latest implications for health, food, national security and the economy. Links to presentations are at <https://www.nebriefing.org/>

Government Environmental Improvement Plan:

Oxford FoE report that Friends of the Earth has responded to the government's new [Environmental Improvement Plan](#) (published December 2025) "Although the plan has more detail than previous versions FoE warns that it still lacks the clear action and investment needed to reverse nature loss. Too much relies on future consultations and voluntary measures and stronger protections for nature are still missing. FoE is calling for firm action to restore habitats, clean up rivers and protect communities from pollution."

'Planning and Infrastructure Bill':

Very disappointing that Lords' amendments to continue to safeguard wildlife were rejected by the Commons. <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/about-us/what-we-do/our-work-land/planning/planning-and-infrastructure-england-bill>

Other up-coming activities (not run by Reading FoE so check for changes):

Ethical Reading - Online Meetup 20th January: **Decarbonising heat - how it should affect you**
Looks interesting - £5 fee may be waived on appeal. <https://www.facebook.com/events/847196251424616>

Humanist talk publicising book in favour of Nuclear Power –

17th February 7:30 Friends Meeting House. <http://facebook.com/events/890933150289228>

Global Justice at RISC – 28th January (?) 7:30 – meeting is called 'Will Open Borders Ever Be Possible?'

~~Do we really have a refugee crisis? We will look at the history, the politics and the people involved. "Water – a Right or a Commodity?" Check date and details if interested?~~

Climate Action Showcase – local actions by young people - 5th February 4 to 6 at RISC – booking essential <https://risc.org.uk/events/climate-action-showcase/>

Green Drinks – usually on the first Tuesday of every month in the Castle Tap – see [Reading Green Drinks | Facebook](#)

People Planet Pint: an informal social meet up, primarily aimed at people involved in sustainability – was on the second Thursday of the month. Milk Bar, 8 Merchants Place, Reading RG1 1DT. Not sure if still going – link please!

Kidical Mass Reading – "Making space for the next generation, one bike ride at a time!" - are holding a number of rides for children in the coming months - see www.kidicalmassreading.co.uk or on Twitter @KidicalMassRead

Reading Critical Mass cycle ride. ... Rides on the last Friday of the month. Leave at 19:30 from the Civic Offices in Bridge Street. Leisurely ride for about an hour and a half finishing at pub. Not sure if still happening. Check before you go! <https://criticalmassreading.wordpress.com/> doesn't seem to be updated ???

XR Reading hold meetings and events – see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/XRRdg/>

Reading Cycle Campaign – has regular monthly meetings and other activities. <https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/>

Repair Cafe – usually third weekend of month - <http://www.transitionreading.org.uk/projects/reading-repair-cafe/>

Reading Bicycle Kitchen – regular sessions – see <https://www.readingbicyclekitchen.org/>

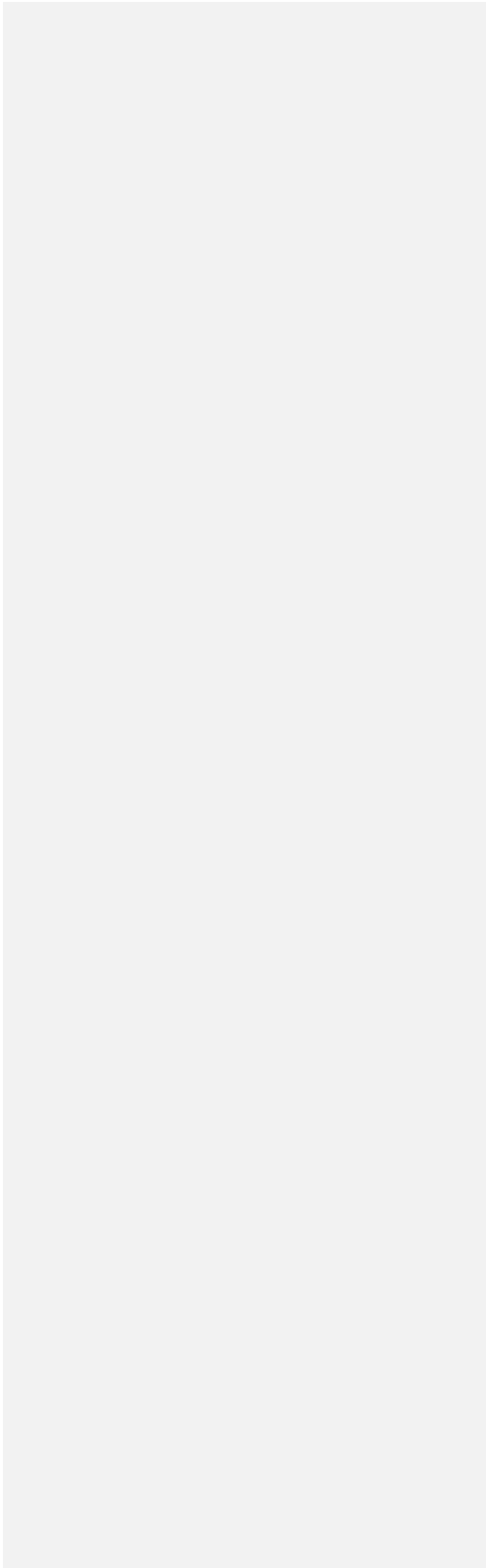
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Administrative matters:

Website Management:

Paolo has created our new website using WordPress. He would welcome any help maintaining, improving and expanding it, and can share the credentials to access the account.

Newsletter curating and contributions:

It would be great to have more people contributing to our newsletter – perhaps changing format or content – please get in touch.

E-mail lists:

We have three e-mail lists: 'newsletter and events'; 'frequent e-mails'; and our public info@readingfoe.co.uk email address (currently goes to five people who help run the group). Please let us know if you would like to be on a different list or to get more involved.

Useful Links and General Information:

Friends of the Earth 'England, Wales and Northern Ireland' <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/>
– Policy and Insight <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/>

GREN - Greater Reading Environmental Network <http://www.gren.org.uk/>. Also [Greater Reading Environment Network | Facebook](#)

Reading Climate Action Network - <https://readingcan.org.uk>

Extinction Rebellion, Reading: <https://www.facebook.com/xrReading/>

Transition Reading - Reading's Transition Town movement <http://www.transitionreading.org.uk>

Newbury Friends of the Earth – Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/755866711218545/>

Berkshire Greenpeace - https://greenwire.greenpeace.org.uk/s/group/0F94H000000CHksSAG/greenpeace-berkshire?language=en_GB

Reading FoE Officers etc.

Our 2025 AGM on April 7th elected Enrico Petrucco to continue in the post of Co-ordinator and Paolo Turati to continue in the post of Treasurer.

Reading FoE e-mail communications

If you would like to become a supporter on our mailing list and receive and join in our day-to-day communications please send an email to info@readingfoe.co.uk to request our GDPR Consent form. We have separate lists for people who only want to receive our newsletters (currently 6 per year) and information about important events and actions, and for people who want to be more involved and communicate directly with other active supporters.

Reading FoE Subscriptions:

A subscription/donation would be welcome from supporters but is not required. We're much happier to have an extra pair of hands doing the important stuff. We aim to provide a regular free of charge newsletter to keep members up to date with the group's activities. We need funds to cover meeting room hire, zoom licence, website costs, and campaign expenses. Contributions of perhaps £10 a year would be greatly appreciated.

To contribute please:

- if you use PayPal go to <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/readingfoe>
- to pay by bank transfer request our bank account details by e-mail to info@readingfoe.co.uk
- or pay cash or cheque at a meeting or event