

Newsletter

07746 371353
Forest **R**ead **E**asy **D**eal



August 2022

Welcome to our latest newsletter. You will see from all the news below that after a difficult couple of years, there is plenty going on with some changes to our Team and a new website! Unfortunately we are saying goodbye to a couple of our experienced coaches, Florence and Anne who are moving away from the area – see Anne’s piece on page 3 – they will be missed! Please email me: sheilapriest49@gmail.com if you have any comments or queries.

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Malcom Vine – Team Leader

I took over the role of Team Leader when Roger Deeks stood down as Chair in May. Roger has successfully chaired FRED for several years and with his deep interest in literature, extensive knowledge of Forester culture and wide network of useful contacts he is a hard act to follow.



The Management Team has reviewed and revised the FRED Constitution to allow for future developments and we are now able to offer reading and writing help beyond the boundary of the Forest. We are delighted to welcome some new blood to the Team to help promote FRED in the new areas, each bringing their own knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to the team.



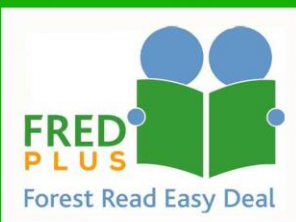
The Referral Network Team

John Izzard covers the Sedbury area as well as helping with administration. Nataline Bennet-Coleman is covering the Chepstow area (see page 2). Bev Atkins and Andrea Harman are helping with publicity and networking.



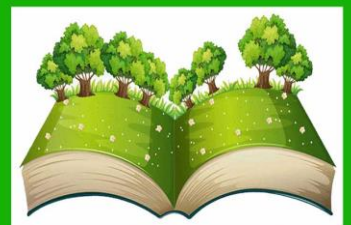
Following the ending of lockdowns we have had to review how we refresh the FRED service, support existing pairs to start to meet again, recruit new potential coaches and learners and remind support organisations and Forest residents in general that FRED is still working locally to help people improve their reading and writing.

We have looked at the literature we use to promote FRED and plan to reduce the number of items overall. We will target these specifically at the audiences we are aiming at and make sure that the information on them is up to date.



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The Covid pandemic and lockdowns have demonstrated how important IT in all its aspects has now become in most walks of life. We aim to build on the good work that Claire has started both to reach more people with the FRED message but also to help those willing to use remote learning. We appreciate that both coaches and learners will in most cases still want the personal one-to-one approach that works well but we also need to build in some flexibility to reflect the reality of people's lives.

Our priority remains recruiting new learners and to this end we have asked one of our coaches Alan Tomkins to take on the role of Events Coordinator. It would be really good to have a calendar of events over the next few months where FRED could have a presence and we can hand out leaflets and talk to members of the public who may be interested in what FRED can offer.

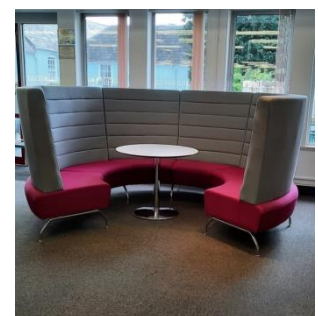
If you know of suitable events coming up in your locality and/or you are willing to help out for an hour or so at an event please let us know.

Welcome to our new Chepstow Venues! - Natalie

I've been busy in the Chepstow area looking for suitable venues for FRED coaching and have found 4 venues which we can use: St. Luke's Church in Tutshill, Sedbury Space, a community venue, the Palmer Centre at the top of Chepstow High Street and Chepstow Library which has workstations, and a specific hub with a seating and working area.



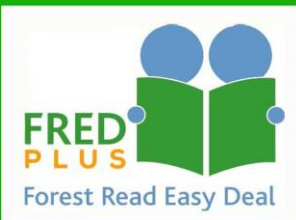
As well as approaching venues, I've also been giving talks to groups in Chepstow to tell them about what FRED can offer. Such groups have included a Mother & Baby Group, a Coffee Morning at Sedbury Space and a Bingo session at The Palmer Centre, to name just a few.



Both Tutshill School and Woolaston School very kindly included a segment explaining all about FRED in their Summer Newsletters, therefore raising our profile throughout a substantial local school population.

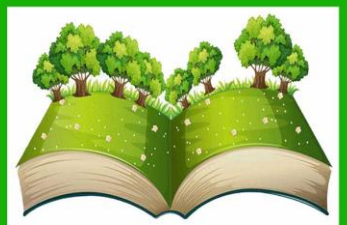
With many women and children arriving in Chepstow from the Ukraine, I attended an afternoon coffee meet up that was specifically for Ukrainians to meet each other at St Christopher's Church Centre in Bulwark. There, I met three ladies. Their spoken English is very good and they are very keen to improve their reading and writing skills with the help of FRED.

Kris is hoping to set up some remote coach training for the potential volunteers on our waiting list and some of these may be able to help out in the Sedbury, Chepstow area.



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Update from Kris – Coach Trainer

I realise it has been some time since we have held a coach meeting or coffee morning. As a team, we thought it might be good to get these going again. Anne is sadly moving on from FRED soon, so, until we have a replacement, I have agreed to start organising a regular meet. It's always difficult to know what time will be best, so I will try to make the times on different days, in different towns to suit the range of Coaches we have. These meetings will be a good opportunity to find out more about what further training you might like. I can offer refresher training as well as training to cater for learners who want more in the way of writing and spelling and also on specific challenges. I would mainly offer these sessions remotely, but we will consider a training session in person if the demand is there.



Moving On.....



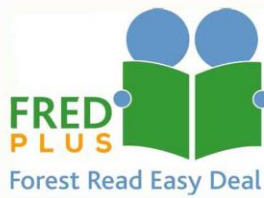
We are sorry to be losing Anne Holt, a valued member of the Team as she will be moving to Wales. She has been a volunteer for a number of years and has had a leading role in new initiatives such as setting up an informal coaches group, testing out the use of protective screens when Covid hit, and helping with the introduction of laptops for remote coaching.

This is what she says about her experiences:-

"Reading has always been a passion of mine and FRED seemed the ideal opportunity to help adults who struggle with reading, improve their skills. After meeting Sheila, FRED's contact coordinator for potential coaches and readers, I attended an excellent training course with Kris, the group's trainer.

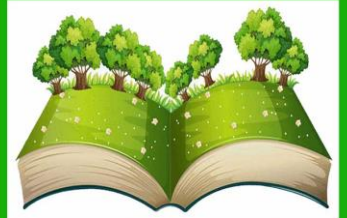
Volunteering with a learner highlighted the difficulties in engaging people on a regular basis: family problems, illness, transport and venue difficulties, also the commitment, determination and tenacity needed to develop a good regular working relationship. However, Kris and Sheila along with other members of the committee provide excellent support with teaching materials, activities and advice on specific difficulties.

I have also enjoyed working alongside other coaches and as part of an excellent group of volunteers on the FRED Team, who work tirelessly to promote FRED in the community, developing publicity materials, liaising with other agencies, developing the use of technology and raising funds, so if you think you could help in any way, FRED is a great organisation to join."



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SEPTEMBER 8th 2021: FRED TEA PARTY

It seems a long time ago now but on a glorious late summer day last year we gathered together again in person for the first time since the start of the Covid pandemic.

We had arranged a tea party for our coaches as a thank you for their efforts. We were treated to a wonderful spread prepared by Jennifer and other members of the team and were able to sit outside in Kris' lovely garden to enjoy our tea and catch up with friends and colleagues.



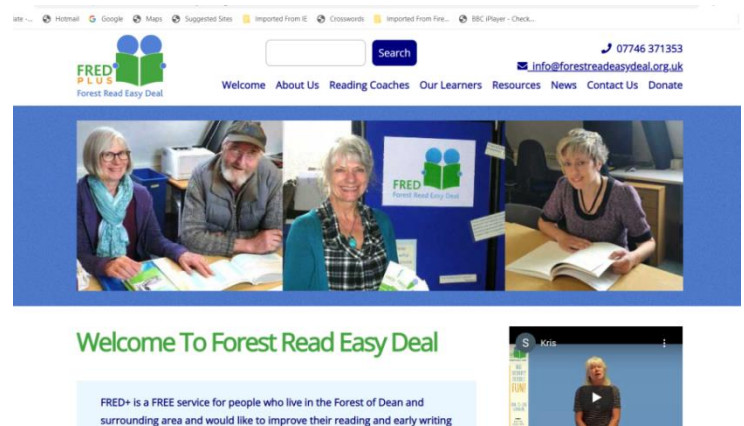
A New Website for FRED – Claire Peach



Our current website was set up in 2012 which in technology terms was the dark ages! At the time, it served its purpose of promoting the early days of FRED, celebrating our progress and the success of our learners, as well as providing information to encourage people to come forward as volunteers and coaches – and to give us funds!

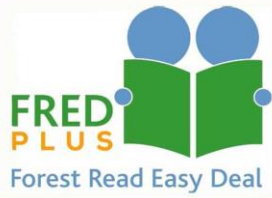
By 2019 technology had moved on, people were using mobile phones to access the internet, and even the computer language in which the program was written was starting to give problems - instructions were becoming obsolete, so bits of the program did not work properly on some browsers. FRED needed a new website! Then Covid struck, which put things on hold until this year.

FRED now has a shiny new website almost ready to go live. FRED's primary role is still the



same, so much of the content will be familiar, just updated, but we hope that the better presentation and hopefully, easier navigation, will encourage more people to find out about FRED and our plans for the future.

Sadly, it's a fact of life that it is almost impossible to launch a new website without there being some teething problems. FRED's new website should be going live during August, and this is when we would welcome your help. If you find any spelling errors, typos or odd format - things can display differently on different browsers, please let us know. Also if there is anything that is confusing, misleading or you think could be improved, we would welcome your feedback.



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Financial Report 2021 – date

Chris Warren, our Treasurer, has done a great job tapping into various funding streams and over the past 2 years we have been awarded £1000 from Barnwood Trust and £750 from Gloucestershire County Council. We have had some donations from private individuals amounting to £350 and £383.93 from FVAF. The Forest Lottery continues to add to the coffers and nearly £225 has gone into the account.

So all in all, our finances are looking healthy so well done Chris and other members of the team!

To support FRED through the lottery, click on:

<https://www.forestlottery.co.uk/support/forest-read-easy-deal>



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