



Alton Climate Action & Network Newsletter – July 2019



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Most of those receiving this first ACAN newsletter will have been at the Open Meeting on 17th June, where we were delighted to welcome almost 100 people. The enthusiasm and commitment expressed was most encouraging and a number of groups have emerged with a determination to take things forward in different areas. Here is a summary of their outline plans. Do join in where you can as we work to reduce our GHG emissions and make our community more self-sustaining.

Green spaces

Gareth has taken charge of what turned out to be the most popular of all the discussion groups. He will be using a separate mailing list specifically for the green spaces group from now on so please let us know if you want to be included and we will pass your details on to him. He is also looking for a free or at least cheap venue for this group to hold meetings, please get in touch if you have any suggestions. Likewise, a volunteer to set up a Facebook page would be very welcome.

The primary focus of the group will be to identify local green spaces and verges which can be planted with biodiversity enriching wildflowers like the river of flowers created recently by Rotherham council.

They have identified at least one town councillor who is keen to see this happen so hope to be able to raise some funding to help with this.



Food

Mary and Clare are taking charge of this popular group. They too will be setting up their own mailing list so do get in touch if you want to be included. Their main concerns were packaging and food waste and are



keen to engage with local shops and supermarkets to see what can be done to reduce both of these. They also want to see kerbside food waste collections and want to promote the various apps that allow people to identify sources of surplus food for individuals to pick up and use.



On another tack they are looking to meet up with a group of people wanting to learn to cook and socialise at the same time in a cook together eat together club and are following up the idea of setting up a community fridge in Alton.

Less Stuff

Penney and her merry team have already made progress in setting up a Repair Café in Alton. They will be holding their repair sessions on the 2nd Saturday of every month in the morning, starting in September at the Community Centre. No charge will be made although donations will be welcomed to help cover the cost of room hire. The team are currently looking to raise funding from different sources.

They hope to have repairers to cover electrical goods, laptops, mechanical items, furniture, bikes, clothes and textiles.

Future ambitions are to set up a tool share and swap facility.

There is also a fledgling team starting to look at clothing with perhaps a clothes swap shop. Do get in touch if you want to get involved with this or the repair café.



Transport

There is a great deal to be done here too although this group does not yet have a leader. Alton has already made a start with its community bus which is in need of volunteer to help with funding and publicity. Ideally we would like a hoppla bus of our own. This would require significant fund raising. If you can help with any of this do get in touch.



Better infrastructure for cyclists is another focus of this group. There are a couple of people expressing an interest on working on this so if you feel you would like to join them let us know.

Of course the best way to improve air quality and safety on our streets is to encourage people to leave their cars at home but for those that can't we would like to lobby for more electric vehicle charge points and encourage taxis to go electric too.



Look out for Energy Alton's display of Electric cars and bicycles at the Alton Classic Car rally on September 21st.

Energy



There are many ways we can reduce our reliance on fossil fuels as a source of energy in our homes. Tim would like to persuade everyone to change to a green energy supplier. John is trying to find a student of statistics with strong Excel skills to produce a hotspots map of Alton's housing stock to target help with retrofitting. Please get in touch if you would like to take this on.

Several of us are keen to investigate setting up a community energy project maybe with Community Energy England to erect a wind turbine on Windmill Hill. Watch this space. The government is opening up the Rural Community Energy Fund again but if it is anything like last time it could be an absolute minefield that requires someone with dogged determination to take this one on.

Another topic discussed was whether we should be approaching all our existing and expected supermarkets to encourage them to install solar panels. The new LIDL could be encouraged to go for ground source heat pumps if they are building from scratch as Sainsbury's did in Basingstoke.

Please also note that preparations for the Energy Alton Home Energy Day at the Assembly Rooms on Saturday 19th October are well under way.

Building standards

Sarah is keen to work on our councils to persuade them of the need to go for higher building standards not just to reduce carbon emissions but also to reduce the amount of retrofitting that will be required if our



AFTER RETRO-FITTING ATTIC



BEFORE RETRO-FITTING ATTIC

housing stock is to be carbon neutral by 2030. This quote from the [Friends of the Earth document "33 actions local authorities can take on climate change"](#) suggests there is a precedent for insisting on higher than current government standards:

12. **Use powers to require higher standards than current national standards** – ideally all new homes and commercial properties should be zero carbon or even better built to Passivhaus standard. Local authorities are unable to mandate this standard, however following work by the Green Building Council and Core Cities the government has clarified that "local authorities are not restricted in their ability to require energy efficiency standards above Building Regulations."⁶ Ipswich and Cambridge councils have included a requirement for all new homes to meet up to the equivalent of 'Code for Sustainable Homes' level 4 standard, which is a 19% improvement on national standards⁷. In London the Mayor's powers are greater and the standard for new homes is zero carbon, although local authorities can use the offsetting approach used by Haringey for income generation (see above).

Do get in touch if you would like to get involved in this.

Lobbying



On Wednesday 26th June Juliet organised for a group of us to join the mass lobby of parliament on climate change in Westminster. Sadly, Damian Hinds our MP was unable to meet with us, so we are now trying to organise a date for a group of us to meet him here in Alton to discuss the climate crisis.

On Monday 17th June Hampshire County Council declared a Climate Emergency making this a very good time to lobby for green measures at all levels of our local councils. A

small group of us will be attending the HCC full council meeting on Thursday 18th July, when it is hoped it will ratify the climate emergency to encourage them to ensure the targets are sufficiently challenging to meet the crisis that we face. John will be one of those addressing the council.

James is hoping to take lobbying further with a small group working together to encourage EHDC and Alton Town Council to declare climate emergencies, again with ambitious but achievable plans and targets. The group would also like to co-ordinate their efforts with other organisations in East Hampshire to increase the impact of their work. Do get in touch if you would like to join them.

Information and Outreach

It was agreed at the ACAN follow up meeting that we would carry on with our stalls at the Alton Craft Fairs for the next 3 months. The next one is Saturday 13th July do let us know if you would like to help.



Eleanor has agreed to start sourcing materials such as Powerpoint presentations, games, videos and other resources we can use to engage groups of all ages, in the Alton area, on the environmental emergency.

Emma volunteered to help with primary, guides, secondary contacts and resources and Gareth has agreed to contact 3rd Alton scouts following up a lead from Community Fayre.

Please get in touch if you have contacts with any groups who might be interested in inviting us to provide speakers, or if you would like to help with materials and/or speaking yourself.



The next meeting of the ACAN group leaders will be Thursday 14th November at a time and location to be advised.