**Speech at Energy Alton’s Home Energy event, 19 October 2019**

**By Councillor Ginny Boxall, Climate Change Champion, East Hampshire District Council and Alton Town Councillor**

Our home Planet Earth is in serious trouble. We have known for some time that our climate has been changing but the speed with which this is happening has taken many by surprise.

For those that may not know me I'm Ginny Boxall and I have lived in the Alton area for 48 years. I was recently elected to serve as a councillor on Alton town council and East Hants District council. I was recently appointed as East Hants District council Climate Champion. As a mother and a grandmother and a keen photographer I aim to do everything I can to make a sustainable future a reality . I can't do this on my own so I'm very thankful to ACAN for helping us all to work together

Now there can be no doubt we have very little time to act in order to prevent a catastrophic and irreversible rise in global temperatures which will lead to rising sea levels, floods, droughts and sweltering heatwaves which will affect all parts of the globe .The melting of the artic and Greenland has already reached the extent predicted by the UN for 2050 and later which is why there is so much more concern and this together with all the wildfires not just in Brazil but in Canada and Siberia. But we still have a decade to stop catastrophic climate change if we all pull together and act now.

Nature needs our help and won't survive without much greater protection .As a keen nature photographer I have surveyed the reduction of our bees, butterflies and insects with great concern. I have been a fierce advocate for protecting biodiversity and meadows protection.

When I was elected as a Liberal Democrat councillor for Town and District I knew that one of the first things I wanted to enact was to get EHDC to Declare a Climate emergency. Fortunately many of my Colleagues across party divisions also felt the same way and I was able to work with my colleagues to bring forward a motion to Declare the climate emergency back in July which was unanimously accepted. East Hants have pledged to deliver on the government Climate change act to deliver zero carbon emissions by 2050. We have also pledged to work across all political parties to do this. Working together is the only way we will be able to deliver on one of the most important issues of our lifetime.

Since the motion was successfully passed I have been working hard at both Town and District level to help identify and shape the initiatives needed to bring forward real and lasting changes that will reduce our carbon emissions across the District and quickly. Both East Hants District council and Alton town council together with ACAN want to link the climate crisis to the wider environmental crisis and our MP Damian Hinds although he is not able to be here today supports us. Greater care must be taken on how we share our planets natural resources more evenly across all species.

Alton town council has already started to think more sustainably about our open spaces, bringing forward wildflower corridors for pollinators at Windmill hill and flood Meadows , to change the Town centre planting to include more perennial planting and water resistant plants. The new bins in the town park provide for more recycling of bottles etc. The promotion of the refill initiative, all small steps but a real step in the right direction.

At District level, the new tree planting initiative and considering fostering a way of working together more with local farmers to encourage wildflower verges and reducing carbon emissions across farmland through precision farming and better land management Producing and selling food more locally with the same or less impact on the environment will be a lasting benefit to our local economy and a win win for the environment.

When it comes to house building a quarter of emissions are generated from energy use and we will campaign to improve new building standards and promote retrofit measures for existing buildings. There is a room full of experts here today to help us with this and I fully support this collaboration and I would like to take this opportunity to Thank everyone making a contribution today. It's amazing what you can achieve when we all pull together.

Locally in Alton , Alton town council have been working with Alton Climate awareness network and Energy Alton to produce a series of ideas to inform and spearhead change within our local community of Alton,

I am delighted today that this Energy day is happening and that so many suppliers and energy experts are here today to help all of you get started and to tackle reducing heat loss and reducing  domestic energy consumption and thereby reducing carbon emissions as an end result.I can promise you that you will all save money on heating your home if you implement some of the initiatives here today and your homes will benefit by being much more comfortable to live in too,

At East Hants District council we have also made a good start. A massive tree planting initiative of 120,000 trees has begun with the first tree planted at Gilbert White’s museum, which is very appropriate as Gilbert White was the 17th century equivalent of David Attenborough and He would have approved of planting trees which will help to capture more carbon.I look forward to celebrating and replicating his legacy throughout next year’s 300 year anniversary of Gilbert's birth.

We have two climate panels up and running and have been hard at work looking at over 70 great initiatives ,from looking at the procurement chain to promoting greater use of electric vehicles from which we need to narrow down to a top 10 list of deliverable measures which will be announced shortly. My colleague Cllr Russell Oppenheimer and I have had a meeting with Farmers in the South Downs park Authority to look at ways of working together to have a lasting impact on reducing carbon emissions in farming and to foster and create wildflower verges and tree planting on farmland across the district. They have also agreed to look at ways of mapping their own carbon footprints in a measurable way. We are committed to working together to address climate emissions.

EHDC has pledged to renew its environment and energy strategy with actions that will reduce its own carbon emissions and promote sustainable business practices.This will be a new 5 year plan and will be drafted by Christmas

Climate strategy will run through all decision making and be reflected in all policy making .In planning the council will seek to introduce sustainable building standards and will work to promote and expand the existing retrofitting project so that real progress is made equally across the whole district.I will continue to work with ACAN and other groups to share our plans and everyone will be given an opportunity to contribute so that together we can deliver on a low carbon future.

The climate lobbying group will be campaigning and lobbying for government funding to improve local environmental projects and influence partner organisations such as councils, schools and businesses to reduce their environmental impacts.

As Climate Champion my role is to engage with the local community to inform and promote projects which encourage individuals to get involved and take steps to tackle their own carbon footprint. Iam delighted to be working with the Butts school on a wildflower meadow project to attract pollinators and also will help capture carbon.

I'm proud that in Alton alone we have started a number of local initiatives from the repair cafe, Alton local food initiative, the Alton and surrounding villages nature group AVLAN and shortly the Alton free food Friday shop. We can all get involved in some capacity from schools implementing no idling Zones to recycling and upcycling tin cans etc there is no excuse to not making a positive and lasting contribution to the climate emergency,

I look forward to a greener, cleaner environment as we embrace electric vehicles fostered by government incentives and switch to greener energy suppliers.

Now is a unique opportunity to make changes for the better so that my grandchildren will truly inherit a better cleaner, healthier  world than is the current situation