



ALTON CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK

Registered charity no. 1189431

Terms of Reference

A feasibility study for engaging Alton's small business community in positive action for climate and nature

Background

Alton Climate Action Network (ACAN – <https://altonclimatenetwork.org.uk>) aims to encourage public understanding and enthusiasm for the benefits of living climate and nature-friendly lives. ACAN brings people in Alton and surrounding villages together to take positive action, reducing our impact on the planet and restoring the natural environment. We facilitate partnerships and knowledge exchange, lead projects, provide advice and information, and conduct outreach to the wider community through social media, newsletters and other formats.

As part of its new strategy, ACAN would like to support the business community in Alton to take positive action for climate and nature. To inform our efforts on this, we are seeking a consultant to conduct a feasibility study that will: i) assess current levels of businesses' engagement with climate and nature solutions; ii) identify obstacles and opportunities for further action; and iii) recommend practical steps for future collaboration. This Terms of Reference sets out the background, objectives, scope, methodology, deliverables, and expected outcomes for the study.

Objectives

- To identify the extent to which Alton's small business community are already taking positive action for climate and nature, and to assess the appetite for working with ACAN or other groups to take further action.
- To assess the support needs and preferred engagement formats of small businesses in further positive action, building on any existing models for business action within Alton or further afield.
- To provide actionable recommendations for steps that ACAN and its partners could take to help businesses take further positive action for climate and nature.

Scope of work, methodology & key outputs

The consultant will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative, semi-structured interviews with local business managers and desk-based research to glean insights from other small business engagement initiatives in the climate-nature space. A thoughtful approach to business engagement will be central, ensuring that approaches take account of day-to-day pressures on business managers and that recommendations are grounded in local realities.

1. Inception meeting with ACAN to confirm research methods and project timelines.
2. Carry out desk research (1-2 days) to summarise insights from comparable local business engagement initiatives locally or elsewhere in the UK.
3. Informed by findings from the desk research, conduct interviews with key representatives from the Alton business sector (20-30 businesses) to determine current approaches to climate-nature issues, support needs for further action and engagement preferences.
4. Draft interim findings and meet with ACAN to discuss potential options for future engagement.
5. Finalise recommendations, including an annotated list of future engagement options, with pros and cons, as well as estimated costs.

Deliverables and timeline

- Inception report detailing methodology and timeline
- Desk research report on insights from comparable small business engagement models
- Summary of small business interview findings
- Interim findings presentation to ACAN
- Final report with annotated options for future engagement, including outline costings

The study is expected to commence with an inception meeting in January/early February 2026 and be completed no later than 30 April 2026, with key milestones agreed with ACAN during the inception meeting.

Consultant requirements

- Proven experience in small business engagement
- Strong qualitative research, analytical and report writing skills
- Prior experience in climate and nature issues, especially as they affect businesses and local communities
- Familiarity with Alton, or very similar contexts, is desirable

Reporting and oversight

The consultant will report to the designated ACAN project lead(s) and provide regular (probably biweekly) updates throughout the study. All outputs will be reviewed and approved by ACAN prior to finalisation.

Budget

A detailed budget proposal outlining professional fees (day rates, including any VAT applicable) and anticipated expenses should be submitted as part of the consultant's application.

The expected budget is between £1,000 and £1,500.

Deadline for applications: **Friday 9th January 2026**

Please email applications to altonclimatenetwork@gmail.com

Interviews will be held on either **Monday 12th or Friday 16th January**

For an informal conversation (before 30th December 2025) please contact ACAN Trustee Rod Painell on rodney.painell@sky.com