



LOCAL COMMUNITY SHOW UP EN MASSE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE



Concerned constituents of all ages gathered at Alton's Public Gardens on 12th November to ask local MP Damian Hinds to do more about the climate emergency. The event, billed as 'Dear Damian', was organised by local community action group the Guild of Optimists in collaboration with Alton Climate Action Network (ACAN) and Young ACAN. The theme was letters to the MP, giving local residents a platform to demand change, and calling on Damian Hinds to engage with what he himself has called 'the defining challenge of our time' – though the event's organisers believe there is a lack of real progress coming from the Conservative party.

"We're frustrated," said organiser and Guild of Optimists co-founder Annie Lancaster. "And clearly we're not alone. We had 12 people reading out letters to the crowd – from children as young as 6 to pensioners – and still more dropping letters into the box to pass on to Damian. This is a crisis that affects us all. It is time to act."

Local children had created more than 50 posters around the theme 'Save our Planet', which were displayed on the ACAN stand during the event. Alongside the letters, there was also music from the Ecostreets Alton project leader Scott Gudrich, and the children and crowd joined together to 'Sing for the Climate'.

The eloquent and passionate array of letters called on Damian to use his power to steer his party in a more sustainable direction, from abandoning plans for further oil and gas exploration and new coal mines, to encouraging greater use of public transport to end our reliance on cars, and retrofitting homes with energy-efficient measures that would not only reduce emissions but also save people from having to choose between heating and eating.

"It was particularly emotional to hear the young people speak," said Emma Jones, who helped found Young ACAN. "They are the ones who will be most affected by this crisis, and also the ones who feel the least heard right now. But some of them will be old enough to vote by the time the next general election comes around, and they are paying attention."

Though Damian Hinds had been invited, he did not attend. However, all the letters were passed onto Mr Hinds at a recent meeting with Young ACAN's ambassadors and students from Alton School with a follow-up meeting planned to discuss the letters.

"It's easy to be defeatist and say there's nothing we can do," noted co-organiser Kat Guenioui, also from the Guild of Optimists. "Frankly, doing nothing is not an option. Our children deserve to have as many choices in life as we have had. We have a responsibility to act, and as our elected representative, so does Damian."

WAYS TO SAVE MONEY AND HELP THE PLANET TOO!



The cost of living crisis is making us all make some tough decisions right now and whilst these are largely driven by a need to save money, there is at least one positive outcome. The planet.

Our current economy is driven by a consumerist society obsessed with buying stuff and consuming more than we actually need! This includes leaving lights on in rooms that are not used or heating a home when everybody is out. This has a cost for the consumer but also the planet too.

ACAN was founded in 2019 as an environmental charity to bring the community together to tackle the climate crisis. Over the past three years, it has created groups such as the Repair Cafe, Community Share and Community Cupboard which focus on providing solutions to waste of all kinds and ultimately helping people to save money (and the planet too!).

- The Repair Cafe prevents the need for items to be thrown away and replaced by repair.
- The Community Share, set up during the first national lockdown, aims to minimise the need to buy items that could otherwise be borrowed like jigsaws, games and toys.
- The Community Cupboard tackles the huge waste from local supermarkets by collecting waste food and redistributing it at its shop in Westbrook Walk.

All these initiatives are run by volunteers and are free - although donations are always welcomed!

More recently in direct response to the Energy Crisis, Energy Alton, ACAN in conjunction with Alton Town Council has opened an Energy Cafe in the Market Square. This free service offers advice on energy including how to save money on your bills.



Alton Energy Advice Cafe

Now open for an extra session at 10 – 12 on Tuesdays to coincide with Market Day.

Come in and chat about practical steps for reducing energy bills, other problems with bills or installing draft-proofing and insulation.

We can also advise on longer term projects such as heat pumps and solar panels.

We have comfy sofas and tea, coffee and cake on offer as well as lots of leaflets and information about Energy and ACAN in general.

Open: Mon 10–12, Tue 10–12 & 6.30–7.30, Wed 12.30–2, Fri 10–12, Sat 10.30–12.

Next Session Sat 10th December

Bring your items for repair along to Alton Community Centre from 10:30am to 12:30pm on:

10th Dec, 18th Feb, 15th Apr

The repair team will be at your service to assist and advise you on repairs to small household items.



MONEY SAVING TIPS

Here are some tips which can both save money and help to keep your home warm.

	Potential Annual Savings
Limit kettle fill	£7
Wash clothes at 30°C	£12
Top up loft insulation to 27cm	£15
Switch off lights on leaving a room	£15
Turn off heating in unused rooms	£21
Turn off all standby appliances	£30
Draught-proof windows, doors, chimneys	£30
Change lights to low energy/LED	£35
Install a water efficient shower head	£67
Air-dry laundry, outdoors or indoors	£85
Install solar hot water panels†	£65
Install solar panels for electricity*	£75 – £150
Turn heating down to 18°C (able bodied residents only)	£90
Add secondary glazing to single glazed windows, or install double glazing	£100
Insulate cavity walls	£160
Insulate solid walls	£260
Replace an old gas boiler	£340

† Plus Renewable Heat Incentive payments

* Plus Feed In Tariff



Source: www.energyalton.org.uk

TOP TIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE CHRISTMAS

1. Bake your own

From mince pies to gingerbread, Christmas is a great time to get baking. It's a brilliant way to get the children in the kitchen and home-baked is tastier, healthier and definitely better for the planet. Why not shop in Fill Up, Alton where you only buy the ingredients you actually need - preventing waste and saving money! Many bakes can be made now and frozen ready for when you need them.

2. Choose planet-friendly wrapping

Wrapping paper is often not recyclable so look out for recycled and recyclable gift wrap or alternatively use fabric instead, as well as fabric ribbons and reusable gift bags. To save money, get creative with rolls of recycled brown paper or other paper like newspaper, old maps or sheet music.

3. Make your own Christmas crackers

Christmas Crackers generally contain plastic tat that nobody really wants. Why not make your own crackers from scratch or buy a kit to add your own surprises. Covering used toilet rolls with paper is definitely the cheapest option but you can buy empty crackers to fill in Oxfam, WHSmith and M&S.

4. Shop second-hand

This year why not choose second-hand gifts rather than buying something new. Support local shops by shopping in Alton's charity shops or alternatively use sites like Ebay and Vinted to find something more unique and unusual for your loved ones.

5. Finally, plan ahead for next year!

Sustainable living requires planning ahead. So, as the curtain closes on Christmas 2022, start thinking about Christmas 2023! Yes, really!

- Save Christmas cards to turn into next year's cards and tags.
- Reuse wrapping paper and ribbons.
- Pack away Christmas decorations carefully ready for next year.

