

ACAN's Vigil of Hope for the UN Climate Talks

The main message to come out of ACAN's 2 day Vigil of Hope was that we need to wake up now and get on with the urgent business of cutting emissions to protect our children's futures.

So far the national commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions do not come close to what is needed to keep global warming to the accepted maximum safe increase of 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels. As Prince Charles said in his opening address "this is our last chance saloon for saving the climate".

ACAN asked people to reflect on what we as individuals can do and asked them to sign a petition demanding our leaders, at all levels of government take resolute action, immediately to cut carbon emissions rapidly before it is too late. 200 signatures were collected in the 2 days.



Climate Justice

Climate justice was the main focus of the vigil. The Church of the Good Shepherd and Parish of the Resurrection reminded us that it was the UK that started the Industrial Revolution and has been responsible for enormous amounts of carbon emissions ever since. Yet it is the poorest developing countries, who have contributed the least to global emissions, that are suffering the worst effects of climate change.



Parishioners of the Church of the Good Shepherd at the vigil.



Reverend Gordon Randall and John Hubbard of the Parish of the Resurrection

Jan Hargate of Alton WI was delighted to be joined by members not just from Alton WI but also Selborne, Holybourne, Chawton, Four Marks, Sheet, Roedowns and Petersfield.



They came with some wonderful banners demanding action now and joined in a rousing chorus of the climate song:

"We need to wake up, we need to wise up, we need to open our eyes and do it now, now, now. We need to build a better future and we need to start right now."

Lillie Ewins, the 16 year old founding member of Young ACAN gave a powerful speech in which she said:

“the climate crisis is a child rights issue” ... “just under half the children on earth are at extremely high risk” “due to cyclones, fires and inadequate essential services such as access to water and sanitation”



Alton’s mayor Councillor Pam Jones reminded us that

*“governments **can** act quickly – back in 1985 when the hole in the ozone layer was discovered they came together to ban the CFC gases that were causing the problem.”*

She finished with a quote from David Attenborough who said:

"Surely we all have a responsibility to care for our Blue Planet. The future of humanity and indeed, all life on earth, now depends on us."



The speeches were followed by a stirring live music set from Lurxx calling on us to “Stand for what we believe”.



Councillor Steve Hunt, Climate Champion for East Hampshire District Council (EHDC), kicked off the second day with a speech in which he said:

“We cannot fiddle while the planet burns”

On a positive note, he reported that despite a very slow start

“the leadership of the district is showing a greater willingness to listen” and “we can expect a big announcement very soon” “our hopes are high”.



Anne Bothwell a parishioners of St. Mary's Catholic Church came along to show their support. She said:

"Caring for our common home is so important and it is something that we can all work towards as a community. I look forward to supporting ACAN at future events."

Bentley primary school pupils produced some brilliant and poignant posters to display at the vigil:



As George Monbiot said in a recent article describing the speed with which the US toolled up for war after the attack on Pearl Harbour:

"The difference between 1941 and 2021 is that now mobilisation needs to come first. We need to build popular movements so big that governments have no choice but to respond to them if they wish to remain in office."

As Eleanor Hill of ACAN said:

"This vigil was part of the mobilisation of Alton's community groups to show we are ready face the challenges ahead."

All we need now is for our leaders to find the political will to make a safer world possible.

Grateful thanks go to Alton Lions for the loan of their gazebo, Alton Town Council for the loan of their sound system and PPL / PRS for granting us a free music licence for the event.



ACAN's trustees and organisers of the vigil

L to R

Eleanor Hill,
Phinna Brealey,
Jenny Griffiths &
Lesley Willis