

Alcester Town Council

How Alcester Town Council engages with the community on issues related to the environment and climate change

The Town Council recognises that change needs to start at home in the community. When the Town Council declared a climate emergency in June 2022, it formed a Climate Change Working Group – reaching out to local people using many different methods to recruit diverse members of the community, ensuring that the future action plan represented the views of the community as well as Councillors.

Town Councils are well placed to engage with their residents as they have often developed trusting and two-way relationships by offering support and listening to concerns. Tackling climate change on a local level relies on welcoming opinions and ideas by having meaningful conversations or consultations with community members so they feel empowered to effect change. The Town Council considers that it has an important role in supporting residents in ways they can make a difference to climate change. For example, the Council promotes “Clean Air Day”. It also regularly reposts advice from other authorities on ways in which individuals can help. There is a separate page on the Town Council website with information on the environment and climate change and there are regular items in the quarterly newsletter.

One of the most popular initiatives in the fight against landfill is the Alcester Repair Café which was formed in collaboration with community members in 2017. Delivered by over 40 volunteers, the Café runs once a month and boasts a skilled group of residents who are happy to repair items free of charge to avoid them being discarded. Alongside this initiative runs a similar themed project which the Town Council has also been instrumental in supporting; a Community Fridge. The principle behind the Fridge is to collect food on its sell by date from local supermarkets and to make this available for the local community to collect. The Fridge is open 7 days a week and in its first year saved 30 tonnes of food from going to landfill.

The Town Council has long had an interest in improving the environment and has historically acquired additional land to provide open space for community use. Most recently it acquired a large tract of land which was the site of a 12th century priory and a scheduled monument. Although the historic remains cannot be disturbed, this former sheep field is now a popular open area for ramblers and dog walkers known as Abbey Fields. A corner of Abbey Fields has now become a “nature corner” managed by Alcester Youth Project (AYP). AYP secured funds from the National Lottery to develop a space for the youth of the town to engage with nature. With the Council’s permission they installed a large table and benches allowing classes of school children to participate in environmental studies. To date, the nature corner has been used for wreath making and mammal trapping. The AYP working with local schools have planted a large number of saplings in the area supplied from the Woodland Trust.

During 2022, the Town Clerk was on the Steering Group for a Local Climate Engagement project which was jointly run by Stratford on Avon DC and Warwick DC using grant funding from central government. This programme led to a number of community events including the Alcester Climate Café in June 2023. This was hosted by the Town Council in the Eric Payne Community Centre and was a 4 hour event seeking to engage residents on a number of climate change related topics

The Town Council was successful in securing a small grant from Waitrose which was used to install a large bug box in the nature corner as well as the planting of two oak trees. The Town Council manages a community orchard which is well used by residents providing various types of fruit and events have taken place with the community, such as Wassailing, apple and plum tree planting and learning how to prune a fruit tree. The Waitrose grant also provided funds to install bat boxes in the Town cemetery. A study by a local ecology company had established the presence of bats on the site and advice from Warwickshire Bat Group allowed the Council to install bat boxes high in the trees to support their colony.

The Alcester Neighbourhood Development Plan which was made in 2021 includes policies on climate change. The Planning Committee consider climate change when considering any application before them.