



Warwickshire Climate Alliance – Current Projects and Activities, and Opportunities for Volunteering

November 2023

1. **Critical assessment of Warwickshire County Council’s Climate Emergency Action Plans** We have published [our assessment of its 2021 Climate Action Plan](#) and [of its 2023 Sustainable Futures Strategy](#) on our website, and have discussed them in meetings with Councillor Heather Timms, responsible for Climate Change, the Environment and Culture (!) and the council officers who support her. As a result of engagement with WCC, Hazel Underwood, of Clean Air Warwickshire and WCA, and Stephen Norrie, of Stratford Climate Action and WCA, have been invited by WCC to join its panel of experts, so it seems that this approach is bearing some fruit. We have also won a £11,000 grant from WCC’s Green Shoots Fund – see “Road Shows” below. Useful metrics for the assessment of local climate emergency action plans are provided by Climate Emergency UK, which assesses every local council’s plans under a range of headings.

Volunteers are needed to work with Stephen Norrie to learn from CEUK’s surveys which are the best councils across the UK, and how they achieve their results, and to assess our local County, District and Borough councils efforts and suggest ways in which they can be strengthened.

2. WCA runs a website, warwickshireclimatealliance.org.

Volunteers are needed to work with Juliet Nickels and David Mond to write and post material for the site and suggest items for the blog.

3. **Tell Warwickshire County Council to divest from fossil fuels!** WCC has £94 million of its employees’ pension fund invested in fossil fuel companies. We are trying to persuade them to divest, as many other councils and other public institutions have done. The decision is in the hands of the county councillors who sit on the pension subcommittee, and we are running a letter-writing campaign to persuade them to divest – you can contribute by going to the [Action Network website](#). The councillors on the committee argue that they are bound by strict rules governing pension fund investments – that the only factor they are allowed to consider is the financial welfare of the pensioners. We believe that the value of fossil fuel shares will only hold up, as the pensions subcommittee members believe it will, if fossil fuels continue to be exploited in a way which is disastrous for our climate. In this case the extra money the pensioners receive from their fossil fuel investments will not compensate them for the environmental catastrophe they and the rest of us will be suffering. By the same token, as appropriate action is taken to limit the use of fossil fuels, the fossil fuel companies’ assets and shares, and WCC’s investments, will lose their value.

It seems that many pension funds are guided by very dubious climate science, which predicts that a temperature rise of between 2.3°C and 4°C will have only minimal impact on economic activity, and that economic growth will continue even with a 5°C to 7°C rise. Economists have claimed, in refereed economics papers, that 6°C of global warming will reduce future global GDP by less than

10%, compared to what GDP would have been in the complete absence of climate change. In contrast, scientists argue, in refereed scientific papers, that 5°C of global warming implies damage that is “beyond catastrophic, including existential threats,” while even 1°C of warming—which we have already passed—could trigger dangerous climate tipping points. This results in a huge disconnect between what scientists expect from global warming, and what pensioners/investors/financial systems are prepared for. It will be important to understand the reasons for this disconnect.

Volunteers are needed to write letters and encourage others to do so. Janet Palmer, of Stratford Friends of the Earth and Warwickshire Climate Alliance, attends national Zoom meetings once a month with activists working for divestment in the same pension partnership as Warwickshire (Border to Coast PP). Volunteers are invited to attend these meetings if they are interested in divestment issues. They are the last Tuesday in each month online, 7.30pm – for more information, contact Janet at janet.palmer@mac.com.

4. **Road Shows** WCA has won a grant of £11,000 from WCC’s Green Shoots Fund, to run six one-day events on climate change in North Warwickshire. Because the north of the county is much less affluent than the south, we believe that in order to alert people there to the climate emergency, a different approach is needed. Our focus in the first of the events, which took place in Nuneaton on September 23rd, was on measures which could save money, save energy and save the climate. The event, held in the Unitarian Church, was entitled “The Big Save”, and featured a pop-up repair café, a toy swap stall, and stalls from [Act on Energy](#) and [Low Carbon Warwickshire Network](#) as well as from WCA. Through running these events we hope both to gather support for climate-saving policies in North Warwickshire and to learn more about how the climate emergency message can best be spread in areas where people may be struggling to make ends meet.

Volunteers are needed to help set up and run stalls at the Road Shows, and to ask the public their views on the issues raised.

5. **Stalls and talks at events such as the annual Leamington Spa EcoFest** We regularly run stalls and engage with the public, with displays of posters about climate change and of literature from national organisation like Friends of the Earth and Global Justice Now, as well as our own leaflets. Our approach at public events is generally to invite people to express their level of agreement or disagreement with a moderately contentious statement such as “Climate change will seriously impact Warwickshire within 10 years” or “The government is failing us on climate change”. This draws passers-by into conversation, and by maintaining a visual display of the response, such as ticks in different columns on a white board, allows us to share the conclusion of our impromptu surveys, in particular in press releases. A photo of the white board after the recent EcoFest formed the centrepiece of a full-page article in the Leamington Courier in which we enumerated some of the government’s failings.

Volunteers are needed to help set up and run our stalls and engage with the public.

6. **Annual rally at the time of the COP** In November in each of the last two years, during the annual COP meeting, WCA has collaborated with other groups to run a rally in Leamington’s Pump Room Gardens, while Stratford Climate Action, one of our partner organisations, has run a rally and march in Stratford. The rallies have featured speakers from WCA partner organisations, local councillors, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, and local and national campaigning organisations, and, where possible live music.

Volunteers are needed to help plan and run this year’s events.

7. For the last three years WCA has run an online **Big Christmas Climate Quiz**. The quizzes have had two halves: in the first, there are four rounds of questions, each focusing on a different aspect: climate science, politics, practical measures, and the natural world, and each presented by a different invited quiz-master. Quiz masters in the past have included Matt Western MP, Warwickshire County Councillor Heather Timms, the Mayor of Leamington Susan Rasmussen, and a range of district and county council officers concerned with climate change. In the second half of the quiz, the public asks the quizmasters about their views and their actions on behalf of the climate. The event is meant to be both serious and light-hearted. The 2022 quiz was unfortunately poorly attended, and it is not clear whether the event will be repeated in 2023. The 2022 quiz, which was quite entertaining, is available on the WCA website.

8. **Climate Hustings** In the run-up to local council elections (in May of alternate years), WCA has run an online Climate Hustings, at which representatives of the major parties contesting the elections answer questions from the public about their climate policies. A [video of the 2023 hustings](#) is available on YouTube. In 2024 we will run an especially important hustings in preparation for the General Election, and will invite the parliamentary candidates to attend.
Volunteers will be needed to prepare testing questions for the candidates and to publicise the event.

9. **Climate Column and Climate News in the local press** We contribute occasional columns on climate related issues to the local press, notably the Leamington Spa Courier and the Stratford Herald. Recent columns in the Courier have discussed the lack of climate-related provision on new homes in the county, the likely effects of climate change on Warwickshire, the size of our carbon footprint, and how the government is failing us on climate change. We have also succeeded in getting coverage of some of our activities in local media across the county.
Volunteers are needed to suggest and or write more articles, and to widen the range of local media which will carry them. We need a media and publicity officer!

10. **Survey of house-owners' views on energy-saving equipment – still at planning stage.** Almost all new housing in the UK is being built without solar panels or heat pumps, as if there were no climate emergency. This is largely the result of the UK government's failure to implement building regulations which would insist on suitable provision. We plan to ask householders in the new estates in the county to what extent their decision to buy their house would have been affected if the construction company had equipped the house appropriately, e.g. with solar panels and heat pumps, with the resulting increases in costs. We are collaborating with George Martin, Chair of the Building Performance Network, a national organisation that provides standards for eco-friendly building, and with an economist from the University of Central England, Eerez Yerushalmi, who has expertise in designing questionnaires of this kind.
Volunteers will be needed to visit the new estates and knock on doors to solicit opinion.

11. **Write to your MP urging stronger action to avert the threat of climate change** The *Guardian* has excellent reporting on Climate Change and Climate Change politics. A particularly authoritative source of information is the UK government's independent *Climate Change Committee*. This reports to the UK parliament in June each year. Its job is to assess the progress the country is making towards meeting the targets set by the government. The CCC was set up by the Labour government in 2008, but was chaired until this year by the former Conservative cabinet minister Lord Deben (John Gummer). Though their reports, available online, are detailed and technical, they are accompanied

by a filmed launch event where they are summarised in an accessible way. [This year's launch](#), just 31 minutes long, features an introduction from Lord Deben. It is sober and polite, but very critical, and a good source of quotes with which to assail your MP.

New roles

WCA would like to find volunteers for the following posts

1. Media and publicity officer
2. Recruitment officer
3. Fundraiser