

North Yorkshire Council Election 5 May 2022

NY Climate Coalition survey of candidate views on key environmental issues

Candidate name	Party	Division
Duncan Ross Russell	Liberal Democrats	Hutton Rudby and Osmotherley

Thanks for taking part in this survey. We hope you will see this as an opportunity to share your thoughts with voters on important climate and environmental issues. While we would ideally like candidates to answer the survey in full, we appreciate that some of the points are quite technical. Candidates come from many different backgrounds and may be drawn to local government because of a passion for other aspects of service delivery and community interest. Please feel free to focus on the questions you feel are most relevant to you. You can always add more information later if you wish.

1. The newly elected members of North Yorkshire Council (NYC) will be responsible for overseeing the county's net zero strategy. Would you support the provision of carbon literacy training (e.g. through the [Carbon Literacy Project](#)) as part of the induction programme for new councillors?

Yes

2. Transport, agriculture and domestic energy are the biggest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in North Yorkshire. In your view, how should the new NY Council tackle these most effectively?

I have no doubt that there is a climate emergency and, if we are to be able to hold our heads up in front of future generations, we must act and act now. I recommend that the Council establishes a Citizen's Assembly to recommend how best to address the climate emergency in North Yorkshire and commits to act upon the assembly's recommendations. This assembly would look at both reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the development of renewable energy solutions for North Yorkshire, providing a holistic strategy.

3. Many politicians support net zero commitments, but some argue that "green" measures to protect the environment and climate are too expensive, will cost jobs and need to be delayed. Where do you stand on this?

I believe the cost of implementation and the level of disruption will increase exponentially the longer we do nothing to address the climate emergency. I have personally demonstrated my commitment to taking action by insulating my home, installing a heat pump and buying only renewable electricity thus making my home net zero. The war in Ukraine has already demonstrated how quickly energy prices can rise and they will only go on rising. So it is not a matter of green measures being too expensive, in fact to delay will make the cost of addressing the Climate Emergency exponentially more expensive. Meanwhile, if momentum in addressing the Climate Emergency is built upon by local government investment the cost

of implementation will be driven down, as we have seen in the recent significant reductions in the cost of solar and wind energy. Meanwhile, such investment can only create jobs.

4. As we seek more energy independence nationally, what role do you see in our region for onshore wind, solar farms and fracking?

Any solution to the Climate Emergency needs to be considered in a holistic manner so the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions needs to be considered alongside the renewable energy strategy. I would include renewable energy strategy in the terms of reference of the Citizen's Assembly recommended above. I am certain that there will be a role for both onshore wind and solar farms and that a Citizen's Assembly will be able to balance the conflicting demands of these with local considerations, the environment and biodiversity to produce a balanced renewable energy strategy for North Yorkshire.

The transition to net zero will have to include some continued use of low emissions fossil fuels for a limited period. I would therefore not write off fracking out of hand. However, the science I have seen to date makes me feel that we are unlikely to be able to develop fracking technology that can both protect the fragile geology we have locally and extract gas economically when the demand is expected to be ever decreasing.

5. How could the future NYC use its powers under the planning system to promote sustainable development? Should there be a presumption against high-carbon development proposals in NYC's planning policies?

I recommend NYC develops a realistic action plan to achieve net zero, as informed by the Citizen's Assembly. All planning applications would be expected to come within the constraints of this plan.

6. There are plans (in the [NY Local Enterprise Partnership strategy](#)) to double the current area of woodland in the region. Would you actively support this target?

Yes, in principle. But this needs to be done as part of a holistic plan that integrates biodiversity net gain with woodland development for carbon sequestration etc.

7. Will you sign the UK Divest Pledge: "If elected, I pledge to support the council divesting its pension fund out of fossil fuels and redirecting those amounts into sustainable investments and the local economy over an appropriate time-scale. I promise to do everything in my power to make sure this happens within the first year of my term in office."

Yes

8. Would you support net zero measures as a spending priority for the new council?

Yes, in principle

9. Most districts/boroughs in NY and around 75% across the UK have declared a climate emergency. In your view, should the new NYC adopt a similar motion to underpin its decarbonisation and planning policies?

Yes

10. Is there anything else you'd like to add on your environmental or climate views?

For example, what would your future priorities be in your division and more widely in North Yorkshire? Do you have any comments on more technical matters such as hydrogen as a fuel, Drax, grid capacity, energy-efficiency, retrofitting, peatland conservation, plastic pollution, waste, circular economy, nature recovery or the government's new energy security strategy?

An awful lot of hot air has been expended on achieving very little when it comes to addressing climate change. I have stressed the importance of a holistic plan, but I would not allow this to become another excuse to delay. If we are to be able to hold our heads up to future generations we need to act and act now.