

North Yorkshire Council Election 5 May 2022

NY Climate Coalition survey of candidate views on key environmental issues

Candidate name	Party	Division
Bob Packham	Labour	Sherburn in Elmet

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?

Transport: Encourage and enhance public transport. Reduce carbon footprint by encouraging staff and councillors to use electric vehicles with appropriate incentives. Electric pool cars. Ensure contracts for waste collection and disposal specify electric vehicles.

Agriculture: Require tenants of NYCC holdings operate to minimise carbon emissions when opportunities arise. Source Council supplies from local businesses where possible.

Domestic energy: Initiate plans to improve the very poor level of insulation of housing, starting with the stock of housing it will "inherit" from constituent authorities. Implement sustainable energy solutions on housing stock (and other Council owned buildings) including solar and heat pumps. In granting planning permissions for housing incorporate conditions to ensure charging points are available and renewable energy technology is used. Encourage innovative design aimed at achieving sustainable development and green energy use.

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?

There is no choice, we must face up to the need to implement green measures. One way to do this is to lead in the development and production of green energy infrastructure, creating jobs and ensuring sustainable development. Planning policies need to be adopted to ensure development is sustainable in the true sense, rather than the lip service paid by current government policy

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

I am opposed to fracking and voted against the application that we determined by NYCC whilst I was a Planning Committee member and Councillor at NYCC. Both onshore wind farms and solar farms need to be located with due consideration for the environment, but there are many areas of North Yorkshire where this is possible. I can see five wind turbines from my house and they are now part of the landscape. We have a solar farm on the edge of my village – I would guess that at least half the population are unaware of its existence.

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?

NYC should consider all planning applications on the basis of their carbon footprint and encourage developers to produce truly sustainable development. NYC should lobby Government to ensure planning policy supports a low carbon future and include policies to achieve this in development plans.

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?

Much of North Yorkshire has a very low level of woodland. Doubling that isn't enough. NYC should work with Woodland Trust and LEP to encourage tree planting based on a proper assessment of the whole of the geographical area of the County.

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."

Clearly there is a need to move the pension funds out of fossil fuels and I will support this, although I believe there are some practical issues that preclude the Council from having the level of control on pension funds to achieve this.

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

Yes

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?

I am not opposed in principle to such a motion; my main concern is that it will be used as an excuse for no action. I would therefore support such a motion provided it included a clear commitment to actually do something.

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?

It is clear, from both the actions of central government and those of the Conservative majority at SDC that there is a lack of commitment to addressing climate change issues. It is necessary to assess all of the issues highlighted above and see where the Council can intervene to speed up progress to net zero, and preferably beyond.

My main concerns are the huge waste of energy as a result of poor insulation, the need for more teeth when proposing planning policies, and the need where possible to promote a circular economy.

In any event, environmental and climate issues need to be at the heart of the actions and policies of the new council from day 1 and if elected I will seek to ensure this is the case.