**North Yorkshire Council Election 5 May 2022**

**NY Climate Coalition survey of candidate views on key environmental issues**

| Candidate name | Party | Division |
|---|---|---|
| Steve Mason | Lib Dem | Amotherby and Ampleforth |

**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?

**I understand the implications very well, and yes I think a carbon literacy course should be part of cllr training**

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?

**Better public transport hubs, development of service village hubs to support rural communities, EV charging points and hydrogen bus service…. actually, any bus service incentivised to be used. Regenerative farming techniques, green farm vehicles etc… rewilding where possible.**

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?

**It's utter rubbish, renewable energy protects consumers from volatile fossil fuel dependency and offer a long term cheap clean energy source**

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

**Fracking is a waste of time, money and energy to delivery, renewables WITH storage (batteries, green hydrogen etc.) are the road map to true energy independence. Solar/biodiversity/farming and even wind can work in Harmony. We just need to take the rhetoric out of the conversations.**

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?

**Local plans reviews should include all contingencies for efficiencies and renewables in housing and yes, if allowed as a material consideration!**

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, especially to retain water on moorland to support the peatlands and slow flow.**

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, but the authority cannot pay for it all, it should look at the private sector for solutions and well as community involvement.**

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, I have the policy motion ready to submit…**

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?

Here's an example of the work I am doing as part of my day job through Environmental Smart CIC

## Climate Action Plans: Carbon Neutral and Beyond

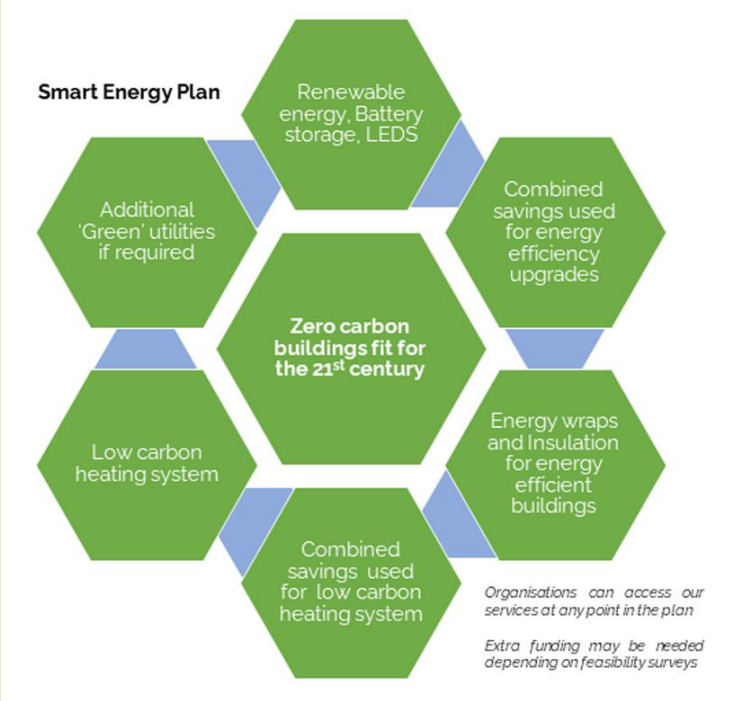
The release of the report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a sombre read for policy makers. The report highlights the urgent need for action to be taken at all levels to reduce carbon emissions.

It is imperative that both the private and public sector switch to renewable energy as part of their strategic plans to reach net zero. However, the focus on energy efficiency and generation alone is not enough and equal focus on non-energy related greenhouse gas emissions and circular economy practices is also required to achieve a low carbon future. Harnessing the power of multi-stakeholder dialogue to overcome barriers and reach agreements on zero carbon, climate resilience, biodiversity and sustainability is key in any climate action plan.

In reducing their carbon footprint, organisations will also become a catalyst for change within the wider community. For instance, local authorities can be the leader, guide and advisor to their residents to help deliver a local economy that can thrive and contribute to reducing the UK carbon emissions.

# Eco Smart Energy Programme

Our EcoSmart Energy Programme is a dynamic one-stop-shop for public and private sector organisations who want to cut their carbon emissions, reduce air pollution, make savings on future budgets and thus develop meaningful improvements to create a superior living and working environment.




From concept to completion, we offer a broad range of energy services and project management for retrofit or new builds, coupled with free, no-obligation feasibility audits and potential funding to make it happen. By removing fossil fuel use and reducing carbon footprints across multiple sectors, we will deliver improvements to both local environments and economies and act as a catalyst for positive change.

There is a need to identify the *aspects* of the systems across an organisation that affect the environment and then measure the *impact* for each of those aspects. This allows decisions to be made on where to apply the best corrective measures first, to reduce overall impacts.

After implementing the corrective measures, progress is monitored to evaluate benefits and shortfalls. Having reviewed the results of these measures, the process can be repeated to create an ongoing and interactive systematic program of energy efficiency and carbon reduction.

A systematic approach to environmental management can provide community and business leaders with information to build success over the long-term and create options for contributing to sustainable development by:

Environmental protection; through mitigation and preventive measures;

- mitigating the potential adverse effect of environmental conditions on the organisation; E.G., adverse weather due to climate change, flooding and air quality
- assisting the organisation in the fulfilment of compliance obligations;
- enhancing environmental performance;
- controlling or influencing the way the organisation's products and services are designed, manufactured, distributed, consumed, and disposed of, by using a lifecycle perspective that can prevent environmental impacts from being unintentionally shifted elsewhere within the lifecycle;
- achieving financial and operational benefits that can result from implementing environmentally-sound alternatives that strengthen the organisation's market position;
- communicating environmental information to relevant interested parties

Not all of these will be relevant to every organisation, but most can be applied and, though it is not always a priority, local authorities, for example, would also like to be empowered by knowing they have things under control.

Our energy services fit perfectly with any organisations' carbon reductions plans. Whether they have already started to act or are at the beginning of their journey, we can not only decarbonise the energy systems, but also help reduce their carbon across both their asset base and the wider local economic region.

By developing a bespoke Smart Energy Programme to design and implement a structured renewable energy management system and drive continual improvements in energy generation, usage and efficiency.

We will:

- Develop a policy for more efficient use of energy;
- Fix targets and objectives to meet the policy;
- Use data to better understand and make decisions about energy use;
- Measure the results;
- Review how well the policy works;
- Continually improve energy management.

This energy management plan will then make it easier for organisations to integrate energy usage into their overall efforts to reduce carbon, improve living standards and wellbeing and provide better overall environmental management.

## Survey and Reduce

Reduce energy consumption of assets through implementation of energy-efficient technologies. We can identify all assets and operations that contribute to the authority's carbon footprint and assess each asset for energy usage reduction and efficiencies. Assessment of assets would include a two-tier review energy audit.

1. This would cover prompt, timescale deliverables that can be arranged through private funding and offer both carbon-reduction and cost-savings to the client (low hanging fruit). Solutions such as LED lighting, building insulation and heat pumps for example, would be included in a tier 1 solution.

2. This would cover bespoke solutions for non-standard energy usage and operations and would require additional research and support to reduce the carbon footprint in these instances. These solutions may not reduce cost of operation but would address the aim of net zero.

A cost benefit can also be run on tier 2 assets/operations and be offset against tier 1 solutions for achievement of net zero.

Pre and Post energy monitoring can be used to confirm delivery goals and baseline standards will be set out within the road map for building assets such as:

- All buildings' internal and external lighting converted to LED. Minimum LED standards set;
- Building windows and insulation levels;
- Building heating systems converted to low-carbon alternatives.

### Generate and Produce

Generate green energy locally on buildings and assets and implement large-scale green energy generation off-site to meet your energy needs.

Council and private land, as well as building assets, can be easily identified for green energy or heat generation and infrastructure. These projects can also be delivered through various funding routes such as grant funding, public investment and private funding.

- Solar PV
- Battery installation
- Hybrid installations
- Heat Pumps
- Potential Geothermal

Baseline standards will be set out within the road map for land assets such as;

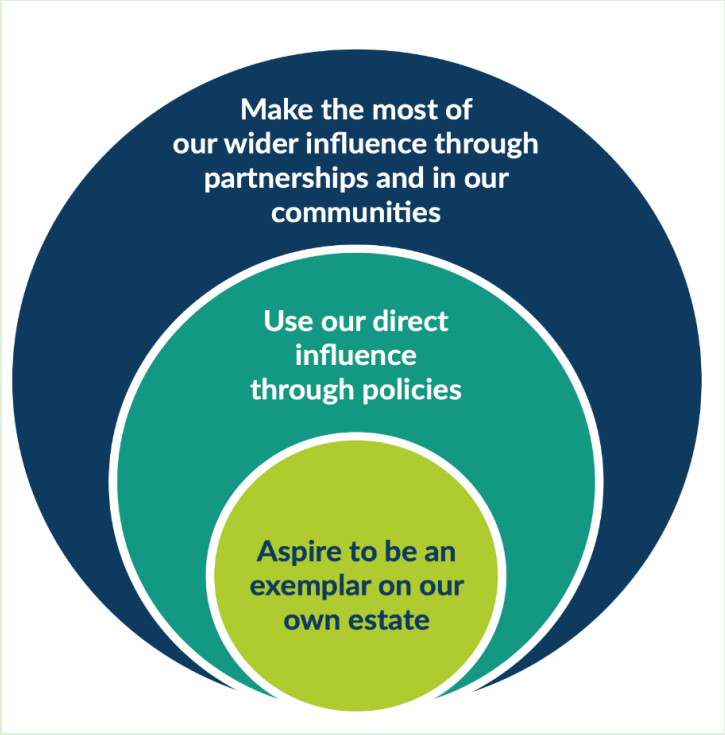
- Minimum green energy generation from current land assets.

Projects will combine various energy solutions with energy management systems to increase efficiency and allow the user to passively benefit from the outcome of frequency or grid management services.

### Utilities

If there is a shortfall in the amount of energy saved or generated from renewables and energy efficiencies within the clients control, we can 'top up' the green energy from our utility partners..

## Harnessing Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure to tackle Climate Change




New and efficient technologies can help us reduce net emissions and create a cleaner world. In the meantime, nature-based solutions provide 'breathing room' while we tackle the decarbonization of our economy.

These solutions allow us to mitigate a portion of our carbon footprint while also supporting vital ecosystem services (air quality, flooding management, access to fresh water, mitigation of urban heat stress, soil quality, healthy diets, food security) and help improve quality of life and mental and physical health. livelihoods, healthy diets, and food security. Green infrastructure and nature-based solutions include improved urban design, water filtration, carbon sequestration, land restoration, agricultural practices, conservation, and the greening of food supply chains.

Together, scalable new technologies and nature-based solutions will enable us all to leapfrog to a cleaner, more resilient world.

Last year the UK became one of the first countries to publish natural capital accounts and these are now included in the UK National Accounts Blue Book. The ONS has also started to publish human capital accounts.

Additionally, recognising that protecting and enhancing our natural assets is crucial to achieving a sustainable, resilient economy. The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review was published in February and represents a strong example of UK thought-leadership on an important environmental issue with clear – but often overlooked – economic consequences.

As well as considering the metrics used to inform decision making, the government is also taking action directly to protect and enhance the natural world. For example, the recent Spending Review settlement increased Defra's budgets by almost £1 billion. This will allow them to do more to harness the power of nature in the fight against climate change - and connect people with green spaces - by planting trees, restoring peatland, creating habitats, and investing in National Parks.

There are three spheres of influence within which local authorities can operate to harness biodiversity and natural capital to reach their climate targets?

Critically the passage of the Environment Bill through Parliament in 2021/22 will result in a framework in which strong local government leadership will be required to reverse biodiversity loss. Recently the Government announced an amendment to the Environment Bill to require an additional legally binding target for species for 2030, aiming to halt the decline of nature. Local authorities will have an enhanced role to play throughout its activities from procurement to planning and one key area of delivery for biodiversity at the local government level will be Biodiversity Net Gain.

The Bill sets out a principle of increasing biodiversity net gain through the planning process. Where net gain contributions from developers cannot be delivered on site, any financial "credits" should be retained by councils so that communities can decide how they are spent. Furthermore, councils are one of the responsible bodies nominated to produce a local nature recovery strategy. This must include a statement of biodiversity principles and a local habitat map.

Councils are seeking enhancements to these powers to protect nature through their strategic planning role through alignment of the Environment Bill and the Planning Bill. The planning, assessment and monitoring of these efforts and gains will fall to local authorities and they need to be armed with the tools and support needed to thrive and deliver.

Utilising cutting edge monitoring services we can measure biodiversity much in the same way as energy usage. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidelines for planning and monitoring biodiversity performance, were published to help organisations evaluate their biodiversity performance and promote internal decision-making and external disclosure.

The services we can bring to organisations in measuring biodiversity in developing an action plan and contribute in particular to Non-Statutory Spatial Strategies and Green Infrastructure Strategy and Spatial Strategy of Local Development Plans, together with Biodiversity Supplementary Planning documents will and have examples of all of these now applying biodiversity, natural capital and carbon emissions implications.

- Support each stage of the mitigation hierarchy.
- Identify irreplaceable habitat and detect critical species.
- Assess ecological equivalence of habitats in different locations.
- Monitor restoration success and inform adaptive management.
- Identify offset sites and enable local stakeholders to engage in long-term monitoring

## Beyond Net Zero: Creating a Sustainable Economy

We can also support community engagement with biodiversity through the local nature recovery networks that are being promoted by DEFRA. Local authorities can support Parish and Town Councils and community groups to enhance biodiversity and habitat with toolkits such as the Local Nature Recovery Toolkit, which can be supported by small grants from Community Chest or Zero Carbon Community Grant schemes (which can be funded through the business rates retention from renewable energy farms in many local authorities).

Equally, green infrastructure can be promoted in place of grey infrastructure. For example, trees, rain-gardens, green roofs and walls, and other vegetation help to cool cities on hot summer days, capture heavy rainfall and improve air quality. Research shows that green infrastructure provides a range of other benefits such as increased biodiversity and improved human health. These are particularly important in urban areas. However, small cities often find green infrastructure expensive or difficult to implement. We can help with the application of a business model that helps to quantify and compare both the economic and ecosystem service/natural capital elements of green infrastructure. These decision-making support tools can help to understand multiple values of investment, returns and justification for a change to procurement cost-benefit analysis.

Any action to achieve Net Zero should be linked with a commitment to meet the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries to end poverty and other social deprivations, improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth as well as tackling climate change protecting the environment. We are entering a

phase of development where carbon cannot be tackled without addressing biodiversity loss. In turn, biodiversity enhancements support well-being. The rise of Nature Based Solutions for climate issues is demonstrating the potential of this co-ordinated drive to deliver huge gains for people and planet on multiple fronts.

Working within a wider network of services, we can not only create smart energy services but also provide the toolsets, training, and solutions to enable the creation of a wider thriving economic model.

Our network has a deep understanding of the challenges facing local authorities, both elected members and officers, and the pressures they face from residents and businesses. It is not only the information and tools that are needed, but there is also often a process of behaviour change needed within key departments of the authority. This often requires awareness-raising, honest discussions, decision-making support tools and examples of best practice, with a clear focus on ways to support the institutional change necessary. High level decision-makers are often removed from the climate and ecological debate. These are officers in Finance, Procurement, Performance Management etc.

We have many years of experience in policy dialogue, helping achieve lasting agreements between multiple stakeholders on complex issues around economic development and environmental sustainability. We provide bespoke capacity-building and specialist policy advice on biodiversity conservation and resources coupled with an evaluation of participatory governance systems to benefit the wider community.

From electrical decarbonisation to powering fleet vehicles with green hydrogen, opening local economic benefits, green skills to developing and monitoring the success of biodiversity net gain projects, our holistic approach offers more opportunities than just cutting carbon.

## Community Driven; The Social and Economic Benefits

Many councils are working towards Net Zero, and a key requirement to get there, is motivating residents to recognize the benefits of a low carbon transition.

A Councils' environmental impacts are often intertwined with residents' footprints in terms of issues such as waste disposal, transport, and council housing. As a result, a combined approach requires acting within areas under councils' direct control, but also engaging residents to understand, embrace and enhance these changes through their actions and lifestyle choices.

We aim to create projects which benefit the environment, and which bring new opportunities for the local labour force, communities and companies to be a part of upcoming and emerging sectors which contribute to delivering the services needed to achieve Net Zero.

The projects, including some developed in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, will support quality of life and prosperity in the local community by contributing to a strong and healthy economy through job creation by introducing a new skill set to its current and future workforce giving communities a sense of ownership of these projects which will heighten their awareness of sustainable energy solutions and the benefits of using the natural environment.

Fast-tracking energy into the community is vital for any region to reach net zero and the social licence created by collaborating with communities is highly valuable and necessary to achieve meaningful action rapidly.

With regards to community energy, we have developed a financial model offering opportunity for local investment alongside private finance on socially responsible projects such as education outlets, charities and community projects. As a result, we can deliver energy projects into the community to bring economic, environmental, and social benefits into the local area giving the opportunity for communities to be able to 'take ownership' of projects, benefit from and be a part of reducing emissions.

By fast-tracking energy into communities, we can:

- Make progress against the government's target to increase renewable energy generation and promote community-owned and beneficial renewable schemes;
- Promote related skills training, rural growth with job creation and retention;
- Enable communities to access the economic benefits and/or savings associated with renewable energy schemes and create community wealth.

## Education

Education has a fundamental role to play in helping to solve the environmental impacts of modern society. We work with teachers, group leaders, community groups and other organisations to deliver a series of learning and training outcomes whilst providing the opportunity to take part in various eco actions within their community.

Working in collaboration with organisations such as Community Energy England we are empowering universities, schools, colleges and communities to be able to decarbonise quickly and cut costs.

In schools, we seek to ignite a spark in the minds of future generations at the point where they are beginning to think about their direction and place in society, by making life and work choices to help build a greener economy. We create resourced education plans and activities that fit in with and enhance the National Curriculum, including:

- Fully resourced lesson plans;
- Interactive activities;
- Online resources linked to further learning;
- Differentiated activities Key Stage 1 - Key Stage 3;
- S.T.E.M. activities cross-referenced to the National Curriculum.

## Community action

Engaging with people, community groups, businesses and non-profit organisations is necessary for almost all sustainable projects to cut through to allow a balanced conversation to happen. It is a critical part of building support or gaining social license to achieve success.

Community groups offer all generations a gateway into learning new skills, ideas and experiences to encourage positive change for themselves and the environment around them, creating many benefits and collaboration opportunities.

These types of projects can enable volunteering actions, promote eco-tourism, corporate social responsibility, eco/traditional skills training weekends, conduct citizen science and surveys with a learning outcome and build stronger environmentally aware communities.

These opportunities have the additional benefits of significantly improving the mental wellbeing of participants and subsequently the residents and visitors alike. It is also shown that participants report enhanced levels of positivity, health, nature awareness, levels of physical activity and increased contact with greenspace and a legacy of pro-environmental behaviour.

Other benefits include:

- Create interest in the countryside and foster meaningful engagement to enhance the natural environment for residents and visitors alike;
- Take environmental action to help understand climate change and biodiversity loss and what action can be taken;
- Keep skills in the local community to contribute to the wellbeing of participants and the local economy, learning new skills is one of the five ways to wellbeing;
- Create inclusive experiences for charities or groups or corporate social responsibility opportunity;
- Attract eco-tourism with commercial benefits for the local economy;
- Make a positive contribution to the health and well-being of communities and groups;
- Harness volunteer capacity to resource and deliver projects. During the pandemic, community action took off like never before The action of volunteering in communities played a significant role in bringing people together. There is a consensus that people value and would like to retain this strong sense of community.