

North Yorkshire Council Election 5 May 2022

NY Climate Coalition survey of candidate views on key environmental issues

Candidate name	Party	Division
Asa Jones	Labour	Whitby West

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?

As someone who has not previously held office (beyond Parish Council level) I would find the inclusion of carbon literacy training in the councillor's induction programme extremely helpful in ensuring I can make decisions as an elected representative on an informed basis of the effect it could have on the environment.

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?

The area of transport is where I have the greatest personal interest and understanding. Both on the level of protecting the environment and of improving our communities, I firmly believe in reducing car usage and ensuring that for the residents of Whitby the car is not the only viable option for traveling both within the town and further afield.

I believe the best way to achieve this is by significantly improving our public transport infrastructure (in NYCC's case: Buses). I would want to see the many local community bus services which we have lost over the last 10 years returned, a greater number of express services between larger urban areas run and the cost of travel for local young and working age people reduced to a reasonable amount. All of these things are obviously dependent upon the co-operation of the companies who run the bus services and the availability of funds. Nevertheless, if possible, these are my goals for reducing car usage in my town.

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 are indeed some political parties and some organisations who represent either businesses or those in work who express concern about the effect of climate measures on jobs and businesses.

The fact of the matter is, that in the vast majority of cases, protecting our environment and fighting the climate crisis often goes hand-in-hand with supporting working class people in their work and small businesses.

On that basis, I say there cannot be any delay!

Labour in North Yorkshire is committed to creating new green jobs through investing in local renewable energy generation, heat pump installation, retrofitting insulation and carbon capture.

I believe we must develop in North Yorkshire this Rural Development Plan further to create new, well-paid jobs in green industries whilst improving our technological and transport infrastructure.

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

Whilst I'm sure (particularly when put on people's houses) solar energy is a good idea, in our part of the world I suspect there are more effective measures.

Wind Power, both off-shore and on land, has to be a priority alongside exploiting the power of the sea and its tides in making our region more energy independent.

I want to support both individual and community endeavours in generating power locally.

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 (and indeed where possible Neighbourhood plans) will be key to introducing requirements on sustainability and reducing carbon output. There needs to be a focus on building energy efficient homes and in retrofitting existing ones.

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?

The focus of the conversation around attempts to combat the climate crisis often regards the costs it will incur to do so. What is often overlooked is the cost we incur when we lose our natural habitats.

Doubling the amount of woodland in NY would be an excellent step in significantly increasing biodiversity in our communities which itself can offer us protections against the effects of our worsening climate.

Whilst I appreciate it is very popular, the moors and its unique environment are not a natural one and are wholly man-made. I would support the re-forestation of parts of the moor-land to re-create the long-lost natural environments in that area.

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."

I have already signed the UK Divest Pledge.

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

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 think I can combine my answer to questions 8 and 9 into one here.

I absolutely support NYC adopting a climate emergency. Whilst there are some who misunderstand such declarations and see them as purely symbolic, they are in fact practically very important. We must make sure that the effects on the environment of every action the council takes is taken into consideration and, if necessary, that actions are not undertaken if the effects are destructive. Of course, this includes a net-zero spending priority.

We can observe the practical outcome of this after the Welsh Government declared a climate emergency when they decided against the construction of new and unnecessary road infrastructure and have instead committed to improving rail connectivity in the country.

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?

As I've said, my personal areas of interest include that of public transport and I am determined to see that for people living in Whitby the car is not their only available means of transport and indeed that options like the bus or cycling are in many cases more favourable.

Of course, Whitby is a very popular tourist destination so considerations of reducing those visiting our town by car are also important. Anyone who has ever been at the train station when the heritage train pulls in or has been near the co-op car park when the coaches collect the tourists at around 4pm will know that already non-car means of traveling to Whitby are very popular but the number of services and the capacity currently is not sufficient to meet that demand. Improving that capacity and improving Whitby's Park-and-Ride infrastructure would be key to reducing car-usage in tourists.