

North Yorkshire Council Election 5 May 2022

NY Climate Coalition survey of candidate views on key environmental issues

Candidate name	Party	Division
Greg White	Conservative	Kirkbymoorside & Dales

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, I believe all decision makers need to have a thorough understanding of these issues and would benefit from a good grasp of the science. I would be particularly keen that the complexity of issues, such as considering the life time carbon cost of products (including mining and processing the necessary raw materials, the manufacturing process and transporting to market) and the need to avoid off-shoring emissions, are covered

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 - Promote and, where appropriate, assist in (1) the provision alternative methods of travel to the private car and (2) the transformation from mostly fossil fuel to mostly alternative fuel private cars, taking account of the need to not prematurely retire existing vehicles (which could increase our carbon footprint).

Agriculture - What people choose to eat should not be a matter for the Council. I do, however, support the provision of factual information, on both the health and environmental impact of different diets, so individuals can make informed choices.

Domestic Energy - There are three things we need to encourage householders to do (1) Reduce energy wasted (eg by not boiling over full kettles, leaving lights on, or having appliances on stand-by) and lost (through poor draft proofing and insulation). (2) Where possible, switching their heating away from fossil fuels. (3) Where appropriate installing solar panels. The new Council will have some social housing within its direct control and I would support it taking effective measures to reduce the carbon footprint of that Estate. Most of the measures requiring investment in private homes would generate

sufficient savings to be self-funding, however the Council could have a role in helping householders to invest to save.

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?

Squarely in the middle. I am on record as saying that action on carbon dioxide is a binary decision. If you don't believe that unsustainable climate change, resulting from human activity, exists then you don't need to take any action. If you do believe (as I do) that it is happening then you cannot use half-measures to combat it. Embracing carbon reduction will not be a pain free process, it will require significant changes to our way of life and substantial reductions in personal consumption. If people are to be persuaded along that route, they will need to believe that it will work.

It is important to accept that this is not a North Yorkshire, UK, or Developed World problem, it is a Global issue. Unless the vast majority of World emissions can be reduced the project will fail. I therefore have some sympathy for those who ask why we have policies, to rapidly reduce our carbon emissions, which could damage our economy and impoverish our citizens, when several competitor countries with substantial emissions are only making vague promises to do something many years hence.

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

Tackling our overall emissions will require a whole range of difficult choices, changes and initiatives. It will not be necessary to adopt every scheme or idea that is put forward, but we will need to adopt a substantial number of them to achieve our emission targets.

Whilst I am not against windmills and don't believe our planning system should not be loaded against them, I believe that it is reasonable to consider the views of those who would live in their shadow, are concerned about the effect on wildlife, or believe that they would spoil a landscape relied on by the tourist industry.

I am strongly in favour of solar farms, although each site should be considered on its individual merit, which would include taking account of the current use of the land.

I do not see a role for shale gas extraction in this area, in normal times there are already more than sufficient fossil fuels that can be exploited without the need to undertake fracking in a rural area that is heavily dependent on tourism.

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 am not sure any development can be truly sustainable, they all consume resources and generate carbon in their construction. I believe each application should be considered on its own merit, based

on what is being proposed and where it will be. It is for central government to determine building standards and regulations.

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, I support this target.

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."

No. It is solely for the pension fund's Trustees, having regard of their obligations to current and future pensioners, to determine how they invest its assets.

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

Yes, as a general principle. The current County Council is already pledged to eliminate its own carbon dioxide emissions if possible and I support this work (in fact, as part of my Executive Member portfolio, I have responsibility for it). I could not, however, support the new Council choosing to prioritise zero emissions over delivering essential services to its residents.

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 do not have a strong view either way. I am not a fan of grand statements which can sometimes sound impressive without being backed by substance. I am much more interested in what the Council actually does than in what it says.

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

Whilst there is definitely a leadership role for North Yorkshire County Council, on reducing carbon dioxide emissions, I don't believe that it should be a bullying or hectoring organisation. Its role will be to deliver essential services and reflect the needs and wants of the people it serves.

It is clear to me that, to meet our targets on carbon dioxide reduction, we will have to consume less, travel less, buy less stuff and make the stuff we do buy last longer.

This is not in the remit of local government, but I would support vehicles, gadgets and appliances all having a minimum design life - planned endurance, rather than planned obsolescence. This could be

achieved by either requiring manufacturers to make repair possible and parts available at a reasonable price for a minimum number of years, or require them to provide an extended long term warranty on all products sold. This would inevitably increase the initial purchase price, but should actually reduce the annualised cost of ownership.

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?