

North Yorkshire Council Election 5 May 2022

NY Climate Coalition survey of candidate views on key environmental issues

Candidate name	Party	Division
Dave Whitfield	Green Party	Sowerby & Topcliffe

- 1 As an elected member of NYC you would be responsible for overseeing the county's decarbonisation strategy. To do this, you will need a clear understanding of climate science and climate change risks. Can you confirm that you already have a good level of carbon literacy or will complete carbon literacy training as a priority if elected?

I can confirm that I have this and will undergo further training if necessary.
- 2 The NY Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has drafted an ambitious regional Decarbonisation Plan ("Routemap to Carbon Negative") that sets out the main sources of GHG emissions by sector in North Yorkshire and proposes various measures to rapidly cut them. The plan is currently out for consultation. Can you confirm that you have studied the draft plan (executive summary and main report) and would support the proposals if elected? Are there any proposals you do not support? If so, why not? How do you feel they could be improved?

Have filled in survey and submitted it. I largely support it but there are various observations I have made within it.
- 3 The main source of emissions in North Yorkshire is transport (2.9 MtCO₂ e/yr). In your view, how should the new NYC Council tackle this most effectively?

Improving infrastructure to support non fossil fuelled transport e.g vehicle charging infrastructure. Investment in public transport, broadening of cycle routes and footpaths. Coordination between different areas on joined up transport policy.
- 4 The next biggest source of emissions in our region is agriculture and land-use change (2.1 MtCO₂/yr). What do you see as the best way(s) to reduce emissions in this sector?

Support agroforestry to enable a doubling of the size of woodland, support to farmers for developing initiatives such as solar farms, encouragement for them to sell produce locally.
- 5 The NY LEP Decarbonisation Plan suggests retrofitting 250,000 homes (insulation, heat pumps) to reach EPC C or better in order to reduce energy demand in buildings and therefore emissions. Is this feasible? Do you think a massive region-wide retrofit programme of this kind should be a council priority? What are your views on hydrogen as a solution?

I am sure it should be aimed at but have no idea about its feasibility. Hydrogen boilers have the potential to provide part of the solution but not an entire one e.g cost to people.
- 6 Some well-known politicians at national level have expressed the view that "green" measures to protect the environment are too expensive and will cost jobs and investment. Where do you stand on this?

This is short term view. **We must take a longer term view; if we do not change the way we operate as a society and a world the cost of climate change financially let alone environmentally will be far greater than any short term financial gains.**
- 7 Where do you stand on fracking? **Against it categorically. It does not offer a sustainable model to carbon zero.**
- 8 To the extent permitted under national law, do you think NYC should adopt a policy of screening out any development proposals that cannot demonstrate a net zero carbon impact? How else could the future NYC use its powers under the planning system to protect the climate and the environment from unsuitable development?

Yes to the first question. New homes only to be allowed if they fit the highest energy efficiency standards, industry similarly. Impact of tourism on region to be monitored and sustainable tourism strategy evolves in light of findings.

- 9 Large areas of North Yorkshire are peatland. According to the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, "For thousands of years, peatlands have stretched across Yorkshire. Our most ancient and iconic landscapes should be a mosaic of vibrant greens, reds and purples. Instead, they are a brown and broken wasteland. We are at risk of losing them forever." What action should the new NYC take to protect this vital habitat?

Work closely with other authorities e.g National Parks to promote and enhance our landscapes, wildlife organisations.

- 10 Waste, plastic and the circular economy. What steps should the new council take to minimise waste, reduce plastic pollution and build a circular economy?

Promote a 3RS policy- Reduce, reuse and recycle. Model best practice of other councils e.g Brighton. Broaden recycling infrastructure , promote charity shops.

- 11 Tree cover. The NY LEP Decarbonisation Plan proposes doubling the current area of woodland in the region. Do you agree? If elected, would you work to meet this target?

Yes, work with farmers and other experts in the field e.g Woodlands Trust Forestry Commission to draw up a feasible plan.

- 12 Where do you stand on Carbon Capture and Storage (CCAS), for example at Drax? How much do you think can we rely on this technology to help cut our emissions?

It certainly has an impact but the financial cost is significant. The legality of imposing this on the owners of Drax needs to be ascertained.

- 13 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."

Absolutely!

- 14 Nature and biodiversity. The LEP Decarbonisation Plan proposes a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Do you support this? What would you like to see in a nature recovery strategy?

Yes. Strategy needs to be underpinned by Climate Emergency Plan as do all strategies. Central to nature recovery strategy needs to be broadening of habitats so greater biodiversity . Also any habitats at risk protected and on going monitoring programmes of these strategies.

- 15 Finance. The proposals set out in the NY LEP plan are designed to help NY achieve net zero by 2034 and be carbon-negative by 2040. The new unitary authority will have a substantial budget, but this will require a lot of investment. Without committing to a blank cheque, would you broadly support the proposals as an investment priority for the new council?

Yes.

- 16 By the time you read this, the government may have published its new energy security strategy. What's your view of the strategy? Does it go far or fast enough? Should we focus more on reducing demand for energy?

Needs to be sustainable and be climate friendly. No to nuclear or fracking and a move from fossil fuels as infrastructure for renewables becomes more developed.

We should certainly focus on reducing demand for energy e.g better management in the home, investment in transport that does not depend on fossil fuels.

17 Anything else you'd like to add on your environmental or climate views? On your previous record or future priorities?

The Green Party is the only party that has consistently put the respect of the environment central to all our policies. We now intend to put all pressure possible on government to not just to talk about things but do them!