

North Yorkshire Council Election 5 May 2022

NY Climate Coalition survey of candidate views on key environmental issues

Candidate name	Party	Division
Colin Challen	Labour and Co-operative	Castle

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 – more investment is needed in public transport, e.g. a more comprehensive bus service (NYCC's recent £116 million bid was rejected by the government); more frequent rail services (Scarborough's direct services to the west are now largely curtailed at York); more investment in electric transport – particularly support for e-bikes – and if people are to be encouraged to cycle the quality of local roads needs improving, and off-highway routes more vigorously explored.

Agriculture – as a vegetarian I would like to see more government funding for sustainable crops rather than for the meat industry.

Domestic energy – more investment is needed, not merely in solar (Thermal and PV) and insulation, but in finding ways of assisting those, like many residents in Scarborough's Old Town who live in 'untreatable' properties to find alternative approaches. This means in part that more renewable energy has to be fed into the grid. Labour's national policy of committing £38 billion to a new energy programme would help a lot.

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?

As we now know, fossil fuels are too expensive and if we had committed to renewables much faster we would not now see energy bills rising as they are. The idea that renewables cost jobs is palpably false. What does cost jobs is government dithering, starting and stopping schemes without developing skills with guaranteed work to follow.

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

More onshore wind makes a lot of sense, and it would be more acceptable if local communities could have ownership of it and reap the rewards, rather than being owned by big utilities. NYCC needs to look at all its won properties to find potential sites for micro-generation, etc. I am and always have been opposed to fracking.

4. 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?

Yes to the second question. As regards planning, e.g. new housing should be permitted only where houses are planned to achieve Passiv House status. Plans need to properly integrate at the earliest stage concrete proposals for adequate public transport and cycling routes. This applies to industrial developments too.

5. 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, and why stop at that?

6. 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

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

Yes, and I would want to see us go further, since the term ‘net zero’ is a license for all sorts of greenwash, e.g. Drax’s claims re: the carbon neutrality of its imported wood pellets.

8. 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 – if it’s backed up with meaningful policies and isn’t just a soundbite.

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?

Whilst I was an MP I established the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Climate Change, and launched two bills, one proposing establishing the framework ‘Contraction and Convergence’ into law and the other to introduce the scheme then known as Domestic Tradable Quotas. I still hold that these two concepts should be introduced – technology alone will not now solve the climate emergency, it needs serious behavioural change too and that can only happen with government action. Voluntary behavioural change is all well and good, but just doesn’t go far enough.

The government’s energy security strategy is very much the same old same old (unfortunately it is not entirely alone in this regard). The commitment to new nuclear makes no sense economically or in the climate change battle (given the length of time it takes to build new nuclear). In terms of a genuine energy security strategy we need a decentralised grid with a multitude of local energy sources – a honeycomb rather than the hub and spoke model.

I would like NYC to carry out a thorough review of its waste and recycling policies, the creation of a unitary authority makes this a necessity anyway.

I also favour circular economy ideas such as Local Exchange Trading Schemes – such things would help people tackle the cost of living crisis. As a Labour and Co-operative Party candidate I am in favour of mutual ownership, and I believe NYC should create officer positions to support the mutual sector.