

North Yorkshire Council Election 5 May 2022

NY Climate Coalition survey of candidate views on key environmental issues

Candidate name	Party	Division
David Seex	The Labour Party	Thirsk

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, it is clear from our manifesto that we in the North Yorkshire Labour Party are committed to working towards achieving net zero carbon emissions across the county by 2030. A properly thought-out induction programme may be a helpful way towards this objective.

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 Council's powers and resources can be most usefully put to massively improving public transport and maximising investment in insulation of the existing building stock. Too often the carbon footprint of the construction or manufacturing process is ignored, usually the 'greenest' building or product is the one you already have, especially if it can be made more energy efficient.

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 is important to consider the lifetime cost and benefit of a project rather than simply the upfront cost. Most 'green' measures or projects that are seen as 'expensive' are cost effective in the longer term. It is important not to think short term or to an election cycle. Sensible renewable energy or insulation initiatives are more likely to produce jobs than to cost them.

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

Great care needs to be used in establishing new onshore wind or solar facilities within the countryside, not only within designated protected areas but to protect productive agricultural land. There are vast areas of commercial roofspace, car parks including the 'roofing over' of surface car parks, etc that can provide for solar collection. Labour party policy is to ban fracking; whilst having to work within a national government legislative framework every effort should be made to minimise the need for fossil fuels. The North Yorkshire Council will not be the Local Planning Authority for the areas within the two National Parks, so should work with the two N P Authorities to develop a joint minerals and energy strategy for the three LPAs. A major action should be to reduce the need for imports of food, manufactured products and energy, and hence the associated 'food miles' etc.

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?

The future NYC will not be the local planning authority for large parts of the county, so a more nuanced approach needs to be taken to managing development within the county. The planning system is in theory, and always has been, intended to promote genuinely sustainable development, not least by ensuring the development only takes place in the correct area. Having been involved in environmental education for many years I am aware that a key problem is that the planning system is widely misunderstood and frequently not used properly. It is also important to recognise that many carbon related issues such as the type and source of building materials used in developemtn are not matters for the planning system as currently framed and a wider view needs to be taken.

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 in principle. This needs to be undertaken in a way that is sympathetic to the existing landscape and agriculture, whilst using appropriate native species avoiding imported plants wherever possible. Much can be achieved by increasing tree cover within existing built up areas which can bring the 'added value' of social and health benefits.

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."

Not without having had a proper chance to consider this in more detail, however I support the intention of the pledge.

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

The term 'net zero measures' is a loose expression that can mean many things. It is clear from our manifesto that we in the North Yorkshire Labour Party are committed to working towards achieving net zero carbon emissions across the county by 2030 and would make this one of a number of spending priorities.

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?

It is important to consider climate change within all policy decisions and our manifesto makes clear our strongly held views, not only those policies related to planning and decarbonisation.

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

I would again draw your attention to sections 19 and 20 of our manifesto and would focus on those areas that are within their purview, whilst campaigning for increasing the powers and resources of Local Authorities.