

North Yorkshire Council Election 5 May 2022

NY Climate Coalition survey of candidate views on key environmental issues

Candidate name	Party	Division
	Green	All divisions

Whilst we approached individual candidates for their views, the Green Party has chosen to submit a party view on behalf of all its Harrogate candidates, which is reproduced below. Please contact your local candidate if you wish to know their personal views.

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 – looks to be a valuable introductory experience.

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?

Set up a department for climate emergency response and give it a generous budget.

Identify those areas within the control of the Council, and encourage planning to respond to the climate emergency – as an emergency!

Identify those areas needing Government support and new national policies and inform government of these needs, if necessary with the support of the local government network of authorities

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?

The alternative of business as usual is costing lives already. To take this view means that one has not responded to Q1, and understood the meaning of ‘emergency’.

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

1. Onshore wind is a no-brainer it should be pursued with vigour. Careful consideration should be given to local community concerns, particularly to address the issue of a feeling of unfairness, where communities feel that there is no benefit to themselves, while others receive the energy generated in their patch
2. Solar farms are very problematical, and should only be developed within an integrated strategy which takes account of: urban and new build options for domestic and industrial buildings, loss of amenity, biodiversity and agricultural productivity potential.
3. Fracking and any further gas and oil extraction has no place in Yorkshire – or anywhere else for that matter.

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?

Engage with the integrated strategy outlined in 4 (above)

There is the potential for policy confusion from the planning point of view by bundling climate and environment as an undifferentiated package. They are interconnected but distinct issues. Planners can make great strides on both these fronts, but the department must be resourced to monitor the implementation of planning conditions and be provided with effective means of enforcement.

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?

Doubling would not begin to address the seriousness of the need. A much larger increase should be sought.

However, there are major issues relating to securing an optimum balance between the economics and climate and biodiversity impacts of this sector. Care should be taken to avoid enthusiastic commitment to foolish quick fixes such as biomass and biochar.

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."

We object to the phrase "appropriate time scale". This should be specified as "within the life of this council". Otherwise the 'pledge' is OK, as far as it goes.

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

yes

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 essential that the Council declare a climate emergency with all haste, but they should also incorporate into all departments of the Council a reasoned, measurable, and evaluated implementation policy. The development of such a policy should be supported by the Chief Executive as the principal Objective of their tenure in office

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

The HBC climate strategy, for example, has no numbers attached, indicating what targets should be set and what criteria can be used to measure success. The timescales envisaged are not matched with practical examples as to how any target may be achieved. For example, household heating clearly needs a general move towards alternatives to gas heating – to be completed, maybe, within a decade. The only number provided is an intention to put a few dozen air source heat pump units in some council houses. This is a purely tokenistic response, if one considers the scale of the problem.

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 power station, grid capacity, energy-efficiency, retrofitting, peatland conservation, plastic pollution, waste, circular economy, nature recovery or the government's new energy security strategy?

All of these areas need attention, but the response to Q2 refers where we need to identify and respond accordingly to areas both within and without a Council's responsibility. Individually, this list of items need thinking through systematically. The key thing is that communities should perceive themselves as being on a journey, and its direction is AWAY from business as usual. Behaviours which have contributed to our current situation need to be reviewed and amended in the light of a new understanding of the global crisis.